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SHORT STORIES.

No. 697.] For the Week Ending May 10th, 1902. [ONE PENNY.

OUR POWERFUL NEW ROMANCE.

NEXT week we shall commence publishing a story by Mr. Henry Farmer, the gifted author of the famous *Pearson's Weekly* serials, "Fettered Lives," and "As a Man Sows." The title was announced as "Thy Will be Done," but has been altered to "OUT OF GREAT TRIBULATION."

This story has been secured at enormous expense, and we only hope that each reader of *Short Stories* will be sufficiently interested in the story to feel justified in inducing at least one friend, who is not a reader of the paper, to take it in.

From start to finish this story will grip the interest of the reader and enlist his sympathy and admiration for the characters portrayed.

One of the moving spirits of this story is Crump, the famous detective who unfathomed the mystery which surrounded the hero of the story "Fettered Lives." Crump himself has an individuality which few other detectives enjoy. He is not a marvellous sleuth-hound; he is simply a clear-headed, plucky and warm-hearted little fellow, whose greatest recreation in life is playing games with his child friends, a recreation in which he indulges even though he may be in the midst of a most important case.

Altogether, the romance will be unquestionably a long way above anything that has yet appeared in *Short Stories*. As the serial is being well advertised, a largely increased sale is expected. Therefore, in order to make sure of securing a copy, *it is necessary that you should ask your newsagent at once to reserve one for you.*

THE EDITOR.

THE BRAINS OF THE FORCE.

A Series of Detective Stories by R. NORMAN SILVER.

THE PERFUME IN THE CUT-GLASS BOTTLE.

CHAPTER I.

A Problem is Stated.

"THE Superintendent, sir."

Lucius Shand checked the lithe arms that were swinging rhythmically about his head a pair of Indian clubs. His coat and vest had been thrown off, and he stood in the middle of his private room, his throat bare, his shirt-sleeves loose, and a bead or two of perspiration on his brow.

"Well?" said the surgeon, looking inquiringly at his assistant, "let him come through, I suppose he's in a hurry, as usual."

The other assented, and opened to its fullest extent the door by which he had just entered to make his announcement.

"Dr. Shand is disengaged, sir," he observed, raising his voice that it might penetrate to the small ante-chamber.

"Good!" was the cheerful response, and a stout, broad-chested man in a semi-military dress waddled rather than walked across the threshold. As the door closed behind his visitor, Lucius Shand flung his heavy boxwood instruments into a corner, and shook that person's hand.

"Sit down, sit down!" he urged, hospitably, "you don't grow any thinner, my dear Quiggan. I am fighting a tendency to corpulence, combined with a suspicious flabbiness of muscle. My prescription is a couple of bouts daily with the clubs."

He began to resume his garments as the Superintendent of Division B sank ponderously into a chair. Despite Lucius Shand's confession, there was nothing about his quick, elastic movements to suggest that he was in the least degree out of condition.

"You don't often get this far," he pursued. "What's in the wind now—something you'd prefer not to trust to the walls of your office at the divisional station? Or is it just a friendly call?"

Divisional Superintendent Quiggan blew his nose diplomatically.

"I—I happened to be in the neighbourhood," he answered, with slow self-possession, "and there *is* a little matter, doctor, on which your opinion—your private opinion, as well as your professional one—would be welcome."

"My dear Superintendent," said the surgeon, sticking into a black silk tie, a pin with an exquisite cameo of Cupid and Psyche, "so long as I can do, single-handed, the work of an intelligent but unlucky police-force, you may count on me. But if I don't get an elegant subscription tombstone when I do sink under the responsibility, I'll come back and haunt every beat in the division. What is it this time—another murder without a clue?"

"Not quite that," replied the Superintendent, blushing hotly under his companion's banter, "burglary with violence—to be exact, presumably burglary with violence. The case is a tangle and seems, on the whole, a bit fishy, but it's a high-class case all the same. You know Arden House?"

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"H'm!" murmured Lucius Shand; "I think I recollect it. A large, irregular mansion, with double verandahs, in a little park, on the very fringe of the division. Lady A. has a daughter and a niece—one fair, the other a dashing brunette — locally famous as the 'beautiful Miss Ardens.'"

Mr. Quiggan nodded. "That is the place," he said. "Well, at two this morning the constable on that particular beat was called by a frightened servant to Arden House. A scream from the direction of Miss Hilary Arden's room (Miss Hilary is Lady A.'s own daughter) had wakened everybody, and her maid had got there to find Miss Hilary ostensibly unconscious on the floor. The French windows leading from her apartment to the upper verandah were ajar, on the carpet was Miss Arden's jewel-case, with its contents scattered round it. Miss Arden's hands were bruised as if by blows, and her forehead also was bruised and bleeding. It was some time, apparently, before she came to."

The surgeon smiled. "You don't disguise your theory, Superintendent," he commented; "I conclude from your 'ostensibly' and 'apparently' that you think this Miss Hilary Arden was shamming."

Superintendent Quiggan spread out a pair of fat palms. "It's a probability," he admitted; "any proper burglar would have nipped off with the jewel-case and rifled it at his leisure. Why, the key was actually in the lock—it hadn't even been forced!—and there were a thousand pounds' worth of jewellery lying on the carpet, bracelets and rings and necklaces and similar trifles."

"What is Miss Arden's version of the affair?" queried Lucius Shand.

"Not very convincing," was the reply, "she alleges that she woke and saw someone at her jewel-box—she never sleeps in the dark, by the way. She sprang up to save it, and was struck on the hands and the forehead as she tried to grasp it. Asked what the person was like, she merely burst into tears and stammered something about having been so excited and not being able to say."

Mr. Quiggan put his plump fingers on his knees and peered into the divisional surgeon's face.

"Now, is that just fishy?" he demanded, "or could shock have upset her memory in patches, leaving her clear as to what occurred, and not as to the appearance of the man himself?"

"Where the human, and particularly the feminine brain is concerned," retorted Lucius Shand, "everything is possible. But I can give no practical verdict unless I see the patient, which should be without delay."

"It shall be immediately," agreed Mr. Quiggan; "my notion of the affair is that there's a plant somewhere, and I don't want the force to look ridiculous."

He rose with difficulty and put on his peaked cap. Late as was the afternoon, the summer day had been oppressive, and the Superintendent was a very Falstaff among police officials.

"The only possible suggestion of burglary," he continued, as if struck by an after-thought, "was a knife which was found on the verandah outside the open window, and which from its gapped edge might have been used to manipulate the catch of the upright casement. But Lady Arden's cook recognised it as one of her kitchen knives, so that actually proves nothing, though, of course, a servant may have had the idea of getting in through the window, borrowing Miss Arden's keys while she slept, and stealing a few trinkets that would not be easily traced."

Lucius Shand bent his head by way of admitting the plausibility of Mr. Quiggan's sudden theory.

"However, our taking the burglary allegation at all seriously," concluded the Superintendent, "depends on your view of Miss Arden's condition. I went up there about noon and overhauled the entire case. And really, doctor, when that charming young lady—for she is charming and as pretty as a picture—told me that she couldn't remember what this mysterious burglar was like, I had to smile."

Mr. Quiggan removed his cap and flourished it indignantly.

"'Was he tall, or short?' I said," declared the Superintendent. "'Had he a beard or a moustache. Was he thin or thick-set?—Surely you can give us some notion?'. But she just cried and said it had been all too terrible and she couldn't tell me any more. A kind of instinct seemed to whisper to me, 'Quiggan, you're being had—this is not what it looks; that dear little girl is stuffing you, for reasons of her own.' And so," ended the chief of Division B., sententiously; "I'm here."

The surgeon reached his square-crowned hat from the rack. "And the sooner we are at Arden House," he said, "the better."

Mr. Quiggan put himself heavily in motion, and they passed out together to get into a cab and be whirled away towards a distant and almost rural part of the division. The summer evening was closing down as they neared their destination.

CHAPTER II.

The Problem Becomes Complex.

"Good evening, my lady, this is an official colleague of mine. I should like him to have a word with Miss Hilary Arden, and then look over the room that was—that was entered last night."

The Superintendent bowed low before the middle-aged yet handsome woman he had just addressed. White-haired, proud, affable, she was a familiar type of English dowager. Her attire showed that the hour was already verging towards that of dinner.

"I—I fear you are attaching too much importance to the incident, Mr.—Mr. Quiggan," she said nervously. "Hilary is being made more unwell by the fuss than by her own unfortunate experience. However, my nephew, Lieutenant Ogilvie, who is visiting us, reached here this afternoon, and as men are more fitted to deal with such matters than women I will leave the affair between him and you."

Mr. Quiggan made a respectful sign of agreement. "Quite so, my lady," he replied, "but I trust there will be no difficulty about our seeing Miss Arden for a moment—this gentleman's view of her injuries may be of great importance."

Lady Arden was impressed by the Superintendent's seriousness. "Very well," she answered, "Mr. Ogilvie, I believe, is dressing for dinner, I will send him a message and bring my daughter to you myself. You will excuse me, no doubt."

With this explanation she left them alone in the room to which they had been ushered on their arrival. It was a spacious, old-fashioned library, with nothing modern about it except the nickel-and-walnut of a neat telephone on the large pedestal desk near the ample hearth.

The Superintendent had strolled to the neighbourhood of the carved mantel. He took up a photograph—a photograph of two young and lovely women in riding costume.

"This is Miss Hilary Arden," he observed, pointing to one of the portraits, "the other is her cousin Claudia. No wonder they are called the 'beautiful Miss Ardens!' Odd, isn't it, neither of them has ever married? They 'came out' more than three years ago."

Lucius Shand glanced at the photo and nodded abstractedly; he was thinking. Mr. Quiggan perceived the fact, put back the "cabinet," and relapsed into a silence that was only interrupted by the return of Lady Arden. With her was a slight yet graceful girl, grey-eyed, golden-locked, pathetically nervous. The latter's cheeks were blanched, and she walked

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unsteadily. The divisional surgeon hastened to place a chair for her, and paused beside it. Ill though she looked, she had dressed for the evening and bore herself with a certain courage.

"You have had a painful shock, I know," said Lucius Shand; "be reassured—I will not trouble you more than I can help. But I am a doctor—may I see this wound you sustained?"

The girl's lips quivered and she seemed about to speak. Instead, she raised a hand to her forehead and brushed back the drooping yellow curls, revealing a bruise both large and severe. It was, indeed, more than a bruise, being scored with several small, incised gashes that had evidently bled. Other marks of the same character, but less severe, were conspicuous on her hands.

"Has your head ached at all since that was done?" queried the surgeon gently.

Hilary Arden sighed, and murmured an affirmative.

Lucius Shand stooped over the fair locks; in all his wide experience he had never seen such a wound.

"What was it you were struck with?" he pursued. The girl looked up at him in sudden alarm, then covered her face.

"Oh, don't, don't!" she sobbed. "I can't bear to think of it. And I can't tell you any more—I can't, really." Her voice was broken, and the surgeon noticed that she shivered strangely. Lady Arden clasped her daughter in her arms.

"I cannot allow her to be excited any further," she said resolutely; "her nerves are not in a fit state. If this gentleman is a doctor he will recognise that."

"You are quite right, madam," owned the surgeon, "and Miss Arden shall not be worried with any more questions—especially as I now know all that I want to."

He laid a marked emphasis on the words, and again Hilary Arden glanced up at him. Lucius Shand affected not to observe the glance; he had turned to his companion.

"Pending our interview with Mr. Ogilvie," he said casually, "I should like to do as you suggested, Superintendent, and visit the scene of the attack. No doubt it is rather out of my province, but——"

Mr. Quiggan accepted the hint, and with a bow to Lady Arden and her charge, led the divisional surgeon out of the library and into the upper regions of the house. At the threshold of a pleasant boudoir on the first floor he stopped and entered.

"This is Miss Hilary Arden's room," he said.

Lucius Shand passed into the apartment, walked across a velvety Persian carpet, and ran his eye over a rosewood toilet-table with side and central mirrors.

At length he put out a hand, caught up a heavy ornamental bottle, twisted out the stopper and sniffed at the contents. The Superintendent gazed at him in stupefaction. The surgeon stuck the open bottle beneath his colleague's nose.

"Ever smell that perfume before?" he asked. Mr. Quiggan drew a critical breath, another and another, but finally answered in the negative.

"Nor I," said Lucius Shand; "however, the point is that Miss Hilary Arden's golden locks are fragrant with it, and that she has been struck on the brow from above with just such a surface as that furnished by the cut-glass facets of this bottle."

He took the flask by the neck and poised it. It afforded a massive, dangerous weapon; the phial was almost solid. As he tilted it the stopper slipped out and fell to the floor. But a few drops of fluid came with it—the bottle was almost empty. Lucius Shand stooped to pick up and replaced the stopper.

"That is why Miss Hilary's hair is loaded with this perfume," he remarked drily; "the bottle practically emptied itself on her head as it was lifted from the blow that left the bruise upon her temple."

"Then there was a burglary after all," faltered the Super-

He went on his knees and sniffed the carpet of the corridor.

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intendent. The surgeon laughed outright, and setting the bottle on the toilet-table, moved towards the door.

"Let us go and see the Lieutenant," he suggested, and stepped out into the corridor. An abrupt rustle of silk reached his ear, and he looked over his shoulder. The dainty ruchings and flounces of a pink dinner-dress were vanishing round a corner of the passage. The surgeon stole to the angle and peeped past it. A latch clicked and the low jar of a closing door followed. But Lucius Shand had caught a glimpse of the retreating figure—it was that of a woman, a striking, imperious brunette, the other of the "beautiful Miss Ardens."

The surgeon pressed onward along the corridor, seized by an overwhelming curiosity. All at once he halted and inhaled sharply the atmosphere of the place. Slowly he raised his fingers to his nostrils and sniffed at them; they bore the odour of the peculiar perfume he had offered for the Superintendent's criticism, yet the degree of the odour was very small. Lucius Shand filled his lungs thoughtfully.

An idea seized him; he went on his knees and sniffed at the carpet of the corridor; it was redolent of the singular scent.

"What the dickens are you doing, doctor?" demanded an astonished voice. It was the Superintendent himself, and he was staring at his crouching colleague.

The divisional surgeon rose. "Envying the bloodhound his nose, my dear Quiggan," he said calmly; "and now for Lieutenant Ogilvie."

He brushed the fluff of the carpet from his garments and, taking the Superintendent's arm, marched him back to the library.

CHAPTER III.

The Problem is Solved.

"My nephew, Lieutenant Ogilvie. Roland, this is Mr. Quiggan, the Superintendent of Police for the division, and, I understand, a doctor, also connected with the police."

Lucius Shand assented. Lieutenant Ogilvie, a bearded, frankly youthful Naval man, acknowledged Lady Arden's introductions in an embarrassed fashion. They had been awaiting the arrival of the surgeon and his colleague. Lucius Shand noticed that Hilary Arden had not withdrawn and that the lieutenant had been hanging over the back of her chair, soothing her in an unmistakably lover-like fashion.

"My aunt," said Roland Ogilvie nervously, "is much obliged to you, gentlemen, for the trouble you are putting yourselves to; but as no great harm has been—that is, as Miss Arden's jewels are intact—we should be glad to avoid any further publicity in this matter."

The Superintendent raised his eyebrows, then knitted them. "It is our duty to follow up the matter, Mr. Ogilvie; burglary, even without robbery, is a crime."

Lucius Shand twisted his long red moustaches with a malicious air.

"Supposing, Mr. Superintendent," he remarked, "that no burglarious entry were ever made—it is a question whether a resident at Arden House could be said to enter it burglariously. The charge in the case would be reduced to one of assault, and if no prosecution were made the whole affair would collapse. To do Miss Arden justice, she did not send for the constable, some frightened member of the servants' staff seems to have done that."

Hilary Arden drew a sharp breath that was distinctly heard in the silence of the room. She had put her hands on the arms of her chair and was gazing at the divisional surgeon.

"Miss Arden's boudoir," went on Lucius Shand, "was of course entered through the window from the upper verandah. But the visitor was not a burglar. A burglar would have had some weapon of his own with which he could have menaced or attacked Miss Arden, instead of using, as was done, one of the heavy cut-glass bottles from the toilet-table."

Hilary Arden sank back, white and gasping; her grey, dilated pupils were fixed on the surgeon's face.

"A charge of theft might be preferred or not, as Miss Arden wishes, in respect of the matters wrested by force from her bruised hands," proceeded Lucius Shand calmly, "yet that, again, is a point for private consideration."

"But—but, Dr. Shand!" began the Superintendent of the B Division, amazed. Roland Ogilvie interrupted him.

"Are you Dr. Shand?" he exclaimed, turning to the surgeon. "Dr. Lucius Shand, brother of Fleet-Surgeon Shand, now on the China station?"

"The same," responded Lucius Shand gravely. Roland Ogilvie held out his hand.

"I am delighted to meet you," he cried; "your brother is a great friend of mine, and I have heard no end of you and your doings. Not that I expected to get such a personal illustration of your abilities. But, by Jove, you've fairly cornered us and we must just throw ourselves on your good offices with the Superintendent. If possible, publicity must be avoided. The truth is——"

"Roland! Roland!" pleaded Lady Arden. "Is this wise?" Her nephew shrugged his shoulders.

"You don't know as much of Dr. Shand as I do, aunt," she was told, "or you would know that he can—that he must be trusted. Dr. Shand, the culprit is this affair is my cousin, Claudia Arden. She is a strange, wild, passionate creature, and she wished to peruse certain letters written by—by——" The young Naval officer paused to blush.

"By me," he said, "to my other cousin Hilary here—at Arden House we are a perfect nest of cousins. I had charged Hilary with a very difficult and even dangerous mission, involving the honour of a person in whom we were both interested. My letters were in that jewel-case. Claudia had, no doubt, noticed that Hilary was receiving envelopes in my writing, of which no family mention was made—and—and conceived a particular view of the fact."

"You mean," interpreted Lucius Shand, bluntly, "that she became jealous and therefore unscrupulous. Gaining access to her cousin's room, she was investigating the contents of the letters, when Miss Hilary woke."

"You are right," said the Lieutenant. "Finding that the letters contained the compromising details to which I have referred, she retained them—by force. As you have seen, after the police had been called in by one of the servants, Hilary did her best to screen our unhappy cousin." He laid an affectionate hand on Hilary's shoulder as he spoke.

"And the—the dangerous letters," asked the surgeon; "they are still in Miss Claudia Arden's possession?"

"Unfortunately yes," rejoined Roland Ogilvie; "she pretends not to understand our appeals and evidently depends upon Hilary to screen her in spite of everything."

"And upon the contents of the letters to support her against any threatened attack," said Lucius Shand.

"Alas, that is so, Dr. Shand," answered Lady Arden, despairingly. The surgeon's mouth set—he crossed the room and laid a thumb and finger upon the handle of the telephone-bell.

"Then I will trouble you to send for Miss Claudia Arden," he responded; "Lady Arden, Miss Hilary, Lieutenant Ogilvie, do not be alarmed. I will but cut this young lady's claws. Do not take me too seriously."

Surprised yet impressed by his manner, Lady Arden rang and ordered a servant to request her niece's presence. A moment elapsed in silence and then there swept in the tall and

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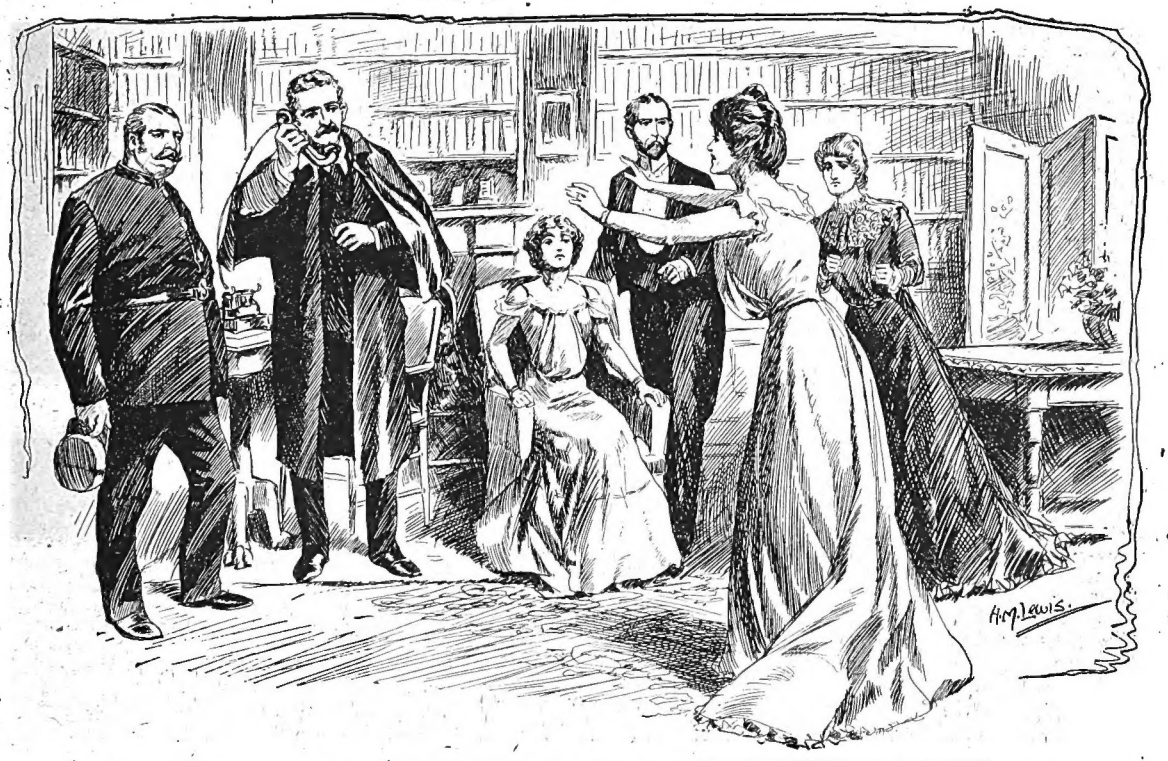

A scream broke from Claudia Arden's lips as she flung out her arms protestingly.

striking figure that Lucius Shand had seen in the corridor upstairs. She looked round coldly with a pair of piercing dark eyes, yet when she noticed the Superintendent's official uniform she paled slightly.

"Miss Arden," said the divisional surgeon; "you have certain letters pilfered from your cousin, Miss Hilary Arden, in the small hours of this morning and retained by force. You will give them to Lieutenant Ogilvie at once."

A flash, as of lightning, gleamed from Claudia Arden's eyes. "You talk in riddles," she retorted; "I know nothing of any such letters. What—" and she paused significantly over the question, "were their nature and contents?"

Roland Ogilvie made an uncontrollable movement, as though to check both the inquiry and any possible answer. Lucius Shand ignored the query and the motion. He bent to the telephone, rang the bell, and put the receiver to his ear.

"Number thirty-six, Exchange," he said, and waited. No one spoke in the library. Hilary had seized the Lieutenant's hand and hid her face. "That the Central Police?" went on the surgeon; "thank you—put me through to the Chief Inspector's office." He waited again. "Ah, good evening, Inspector," he said, after an instant's interval; "Dr. Shand is speaking; will you send up a couple of constables and a a female searcher immediately in a cab to——"

A scream broke from Claudia Arden's lips and she flung out her arms protestingly. "Don't, don't!" she gasped; "you shall have them, only not that, I couldn't stand it."

With a rapid gesture, she thrust her hand into the corsage of her dinner-gown, took out a packet of letters and threw them on the floor.

Lucius Shand stepped aside—a long forefinger resting on the hook of the telephone receiver and pressing it down; not a word of what he had said had been allowed to pass over the wire.

"But you shall know what is in the letters," cried Claudia Arden; "I will tell you that much and shame my aunt and her precious Hilary. What has Miss Hilary been doing but getting back forged bills—bills forged by——"

The surgeon interrupted: "Superintendent," he observed, "I think that there may be a charge to take, after all, against this—this person. A charge of attempted murder, now——!" and he brushed the curls from Hilary Arden's forehead to show the ugly bruise made by the cut-glass bottle.

Claudia Arden snarled like an angry cat, contemplated the surgeon a moment and then swept from the library.

"So ends my tragi-comedy," he said; "ladies, Mr. Ogilvie, I think the Superintendent and myself may now retire."

The surgeon and his companion departed amid a series of grateful, if rather melancholy farewells.

Lieutenant Ogilvie went out with them into the hall. The surgeon availed himself of the opportunity to put a question.

"That perfume in the bottle responsible for the injury to to Miss Arden," he queried; "what was it? I owe it a debt of gratitude—had it not showered upon Miss Hilary's hair and her cousin's skirts in that singular contest last night, I should for once have been at a loss."

"Oh," said the lieutenant; "that was an extract of the Luzon lily—a rare perfume I sent Hilary from the Philippines. By the bye," and he drew the divisional surgeon aside, "the forger of those bills was Hilary's own brother, a middy on the *Melancthon*. They were held here and she got them back, I finding the cash in the hope of keeping it from his mother."

"And there was nothing but that in the letters?" asked the surgeon, with a smile.

"Well," said Roland Ogilvie, flushing ingenuously, "perhaps there was."

"Quite so," answered Lucius Shand; "in that case I congratulate you."

And he hurried after the thoughtful Superintendent.

[The next of this series, "The Riddle of the Gipsy Caravan," will be published in the number dated May 24.]

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Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

He Offers up his Life in the Interests of Medical Science.

Whenever Mr. Bowser has any lofty purpose in view Mrs. Bowser can detect it as soon as he enters the house, and, though the knowledge may not aid her to turn him aside, it somewhat prepares her for the shock to come.

He had been very quiet for a week and had not even hinted at buying pigs or chickens when he came home with a glow on his face. In addition to the glow, there was a look of stern resolution, and her heart beat faster as she wondered whether he was going to experiment on the gas meter or overhaul the interior of the piano. He treated her with a bland condescension during the dinner-hour and had no information to give, and it was not until the meal was finished that he said:

"Mrs. Bowser, you may have seen something in the papers about the dispute between Professor Boxly and Dr. Hurley?"

"I don't remember," she replied.

"Probably not. If it had been a bit of social scandal, you'd have remembered all about it, but as it related to medical science you didn't think it worth reading. The dispute, as I may inform you, arose over the cause of influenza. The doctor asserted that it was simply a disorder which was spread by its infectious nature, and the professor contended that the moon was directly responsible for it in every case."

"But how could the moon be responsible? What an absurd idea!"

"Don't go too fast, my dear woman. If you had read his articles, you would not call the idea absurd. Have you ever noticed a mist rising from the earth at night?"

"Perhaps I have sometimes."

"Well, that mist is caused by the moon, even when the moon is no to be seen. The mist is sometimes easily seen. At other times you do not perceive it. This mist is composed of the germs of influenza. There is always most mist at a full moon, and consequently the number of cases of influenza are greater. Do you follow me?"

"No, I don't," replied Mrs. Bowser. "I don't believe the moon is any more responsible for influenza than my old shoes, while it is well known that it is spread in the same manner as every other epidemic."

"Good! Good!" chuckled Mr. Bowser. "I am glad to hear you express a decided opinion. We now come to the point in the case. I have decided in the interests of medical science to prove or disprove the professor's theory."

"W-what are you going to do?"

"Offer myself as a sacrifice. To-night, we have a glorious full moon, and there will be a mist. I will sit in the full orb of night and make a square test. If the influenza follows, then it follows that Professor Boxly is right. If not, then I will purposely take infection from an influenza patient to-morrow night."

"But if you have a bad attack of influenza you may die," protested Mrs. Bowser.

"Exactly, my dear woman—exactly," said Mr. Bowser, with a flourish of his hand. "If I die, however, it will be in the interests of science and save thousands of others. Someone has got to sacrifice himself, and why shouldn't it be me?"

Mrs. Bowser could say nothing further. Having made up his mind to sit in the moonlight, Mr. Bowser would sit there even if the house took fire. He was in no hurry, however. He got down the encyclopædia and looked up "moon" and "mists," and by ten o'clock he felt himself thoroughly posted. As Mrs. Bowser was ready to go upstairs she asked:

"Where do you propose to carry out this experiment?"

"I shall sit on the front steps," he replied.

"And how long will it take?"

"I can't say about that. I'll give it two hours anyhow. You go to bed, and don't worry about me. It will take the influenza germs a day or two to develop. I think I'll take the cat out for company."

Five minutes later he took a seat on the top step, with the cat at his left hand. It was a warm and balmy night, and he was in his shirtsleeves and bareheaded. The cat didn't know anything about influenza or mists, and she didn't care in the very least whether the moon were full or not in sight at all, but she purred in contentment and kept her eyes fixed for flying insects. Mr. Bowser wasn't doing his work in a slipshod fashion. He had a notebook and pencil with him, and he jotted down notes for the benefit of Professor Boxly and mankind in general.

"10 o'clock.—Just sat down in the full light of the moon."

"10.5.—Think I observe a slight mist."

"10.10.—Am positive there is a mist."

"10.20.—Feel shivery, and the cat has shuddered once or twice."

"10.30.—Slight coldness up and down the spine."

"10.40.—The cat is looking about in a strange manner as if seeing germs."

"11 o'clock.—Cat is still uneasy, and I believe I have absorbed the germs of influenza. If the disease should prove fatal——"

That was the end of his notes. Just then an old woman with a stick and a basket came along and halted at the gate. Mr. Bowser was watching for mists and gave her no attention until she opened the gate and entered, and said:

"Yes, it's the same man, and now he's got to make things right."

"What's the matter, my good woman?" he asked.

"The matter is that you passed a lead sixpence off on a poor widder. I want a good sixpence in exchange."

"You mean you came here asking for charity and I gave you a bad coin?"

"That's it, sir. You knew I was a widder who hadn't bread in the house, but you worked a game on me."

"I never did!" exclaimed Mr. Bowser. "You must be mistaken in the house."

"Not at all, sir. I remember your bald head and red face

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and way of speaking. Yes, it was you, and now you must do the right thing or there'll be trouble!"

"Woman, go on! I know nothing about it. You are either drunk or crazy."

But she refused to go on. On the contrary, she began talking in such shrill tones that the neighbours wakened and looked out of their windows. Mr. Bowser forgot the moon, the mists, and influenza, and seized the woman by the arm and led her to the gate. She fought back and raised her voice still higher, and of a sudden two policeman came running.

They saw a woman in the grasp of a man, and that was sufficient. They seized Mr. Bowser on either side and wrenched and jammed and jerked him. Then as he tried to explain they slammed him against the fence and pushed him about and poked him in the ribs, and then away they went, dragging him between them.

They were just about to take him into the police-station when Mr. Bowser's family butcher happened along and induced them to listen and finally decide on letting him go. He limped back to the house. The moon still shed her glorious beams, but he saw her not. There was a mist hovering about the cat waiting at the gate, but he gave it no heed. With sighs and groans he drew himself up the steps and kicked open the door, and as he saw Mrs. Bowser in the hall he extended his arm until his finger almost touched her nose and hoarsely whispered:

"Would-be assassin, behold your work! You were coming to exult over my corpse. Make no excuses to me, for they won't go. To-morrow, woman, we separate for ever, and I—I——"

He couldn't get out another word, and as he stood panting and gasping and gesticulating, she went back upstairs, and the cat demurely followed.

M. Quad.

The Hampstead Mystery.

A Story of a Woman's Justice.

By LEVIN CARNAC.

"Shortly after six this morning, a workman going to his employment across Hampstead Fields, was horrified to find lying on the ground under the trees two human bodies, which he at first took to be lifeless, but closer examination if anything increased the man's horror, by showing him that one of the bodies was that of a young man of about six-and-twenty years of age, who had evidently hanged himself, while the other was that of a young lady in a fainting condition, who had apparently cut the suicide down, and then fallen fainting on the body.

"Information was at once given to the police, who removed the two unfortunates to the station where the divisional surgeon soon restored the young lady to consciousness, after which she was sent to her residence in a cab. The police refused to answer any inquiries as to the identity of the deceased or that of the young lady. An inquest will be held this afternoon, and in our late edition we hope to be able to put fuller details of this mysterious affair before our readers."

The above appeared at the head of the sensation columns of a prominent London evening paper one morning now nearly four years ago. The extra special edition contained the following somewhat meagre addition to it:

"At the inquest held this afternoon it transpired that the young man was named Lionel Hudson. He was extremely well-connected, and occupied the post of assistant cashier in a very old-established private bank, Boyle's, in Throgmorton Street. No cause was shown by the evidence for the rash act, as Mr. Hudson, so far as is known, was in no trouble previous to his death. In addition to his salary he was in receipt of an ample allowance from his father, and although he had strong leanings towards sport, and was in the habit of backing his fancy now and again on the turf, it is not known that he ever went beyond his depths, or suffered from any financial embarrassments or other troubles which could have driven him to so dreadful a refuge.

"The name of the young lady has not transpired, a medical certificate being handed in to the coroner to the effect that she was suffering from a severe attack of hysteria, which made her incapable of understanding anything that was said to her or answering questions coherently. As there was no doubt about the cause of death, the jury, after viewing the body, returned a formal verdict in the usual terms."

The following day, the growing public interest in what was called the "Hampstead Mystery," was suddenly and permanently diverted to the more congenially interesting subject of a peculiarly horrible murder of the Whitechapel type, and so the Hampstead tragedy, or whatever it was, dropped quickly out of the public ken, and the story of the suicide and the girl who had fainted on his dead body after cutting him down, remained unknown until the present time of writing.

It was a bright, soft, summer night—one of those wonderfully brilliant moonlight nights for which the coast of Brittany is famed—and a man and a woman were walking slowly along the splendid sweep of smooth, sloping sand of which the good town of St. Malo is so justly proud.

The woman was little more than twenty, if, indeed, she had quite got out of her teens. Her face was a pretty one, but it was that kind of face which, without the indefinable charm of expression which lighted it up, would have looked almost plain. She was well, in fact, expensively, dressed, though quietly and in excellent taste, and she carried her clothes with an easy, unconscious grace which, added to her good looks and facial charm of expression, made her about as fascinating a woman as a man ever lost his head over.

Her companion was a man a year or two on the right side of thirty—a tall, well set-up young fellow, with good features, close-curling blonde hair, and an irreproachable silken moustache. His complexion was a healthy bronze and, altogether, he would have had every claim to be considered a distinctly handsome man had it not been for the fact that his eyes were just about half a shade too light, and that they were rather more mobile than a strong man's eyes ought to be.

Their conversation was evidently one in which both were deeply interested. While they were near the Casino, and within earshot of the little groups and pairs of people who were also enjoying the moonlight on the *plage*, they spoke almost in an undertone, as though they didn't care about anyone else overhearing them, but when they got a little way

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out to where the groups and pairs—now mostly pairs—were widely scattered over the broad sands, they spoke up a little more, and if you had been within ten yards of them, as you may be quite sure no one was, you might have heard the woman say:

"Yes, I thought it would startle you a bit. It is rather a novel proposal, I confess, but I really cannot see why a few minutes' thought shouldn't show you that it is entirely reasonable."

"Reasonable!" exclaimed the man, with a short, uneasy laugh. "Surely you don't call it reasonable to ask a man who has worked hard and raised himself by his own exertions——"

"Assisted by some remarkably lucky speculations made on information which was, well, we will say, at least very timely," interrupted the woman, looking up at him with something like a sneer on her pretty lips.

"Now, my dear Madge, surely we haven't come out here to quarrel. I have not rejected your proposal, I was only saying how very extraordinary it is, and perhaps I was hoping that when I had put all the circumstances before you you might, of your mercy, make the terms a little less hard."

He spoke gently, almost fondly, for he was hopelessly in love with this fascinating girl-woman, and had loved her for years before she had married the husband who was not himself—an event which had taken place not quite four months before. He would dearly have liked to slip his hand inside her arm and take hold of the little neatly-gloved hand that was keeping her skirt clear of the sand, but the moonlight was a little too bright for that, since it was quite bright enough for them to have been recognised by others staying in the hotel. So he kept his distance, about eighteen inches or so from her side, and walked on, pulling at his cigar, and switching at the sand with his cane, in a way that made him look the most careless and the least interested of strollers.

"Less hard!" she said, with a somewhat mirthless little laugh. "Come, now, I don't quite see how you can expect that, when you see all the circumstances, as you call them. Let us look at the said circumstances and see. You are, well, we will say, an old sweetheart of mine, one of two about whose existence as such poor Sir George knows nothing. A couple of years ago you were chief cashier at Boyle's Bank. You got on very fast, and now, by a combination of good luck and good management, you are almost wealthy. Your rival is dead——"

"Don't talk about that, Madge, for Heaven's sake!" he interrupted, almost harshly. "Don't bring that terrible story up again. Heaven only knows why poor Leo should have done that. Certainly it was not on account of any decided preference that you showed for me, for neither of us could tell one day from the other which one of us you liked better. But, there, that's gone and done with; we will let the poor fellow rest in his grave. It is the present and the future that concerns us."

"Very well," she said, in a tone whose evenness made it sound almost hard; "we will let the past bury its dead, as you say, and come to the present and the future. I married Sir George, as I am not ashamed to confess, for his money and his position, and I've already found that I've made a very bad bargain—so bad that I am almost careless of what happens to me if I could only escape from a bondage that is getting intolerable.

"Now you, to put it frankly—brutally, if you like—want me to leave him and go off with you, as a good many other men and women have done under similar circumstances, and I have told you that I am willing to do so on one condition."

"And what a condition!" he exclaimed, with a shrug of his shoulders. "The sacrifice of my honour and good name!"

"Spoken—well—like a man, if not much like a lover!" she exclaimed, with a touch of bitterness in her tone. "And what about my honour and good name? Come now, Frank, be sensible, and look at it like the man of business that you used to be.

"You ask me to forfeit my position in the world, temporarily at least, and with it everything that a woman is supposed to hold dear. Of course, I am perfectly aware that it is quite possible nowadays for people to go through the divorce court, marry again, and be perfectly respectable members of society all the while. I risk everything and you nothing, except the law costs and damages. Surely it is fair that I should ask you to incur a risk equal to mine."

"But that is the risk of making myself an outcast—no, worse than that, a felon," he objected again, this time a trifle more strenuously than before.

"There is no risk at all," she said; "save in one event, and that can only come to pass through your breaking faith with me, which, of course, you don't for a moment dream of doing."

"Of course not!" he exclaimed. "Therefore, why——"

"Because—well—because, if you like, it is a woman's whim that you should do so," she said, decidedly. "My mind is quite made up on that point. If you take me you must take the risk as well. You want me to commit what is a crime in the moral sense. There is only a social penalty for that, and it falls on me and not on you, according to the justice of Society. In return I want you to commit a crime that carries a criminal punishment with it, so that for the time being," she went on, with a nervous little laugh, "we shall be two criminals together.

"After all it is very simple. You are to forge Sir George's name to a cheque for a thousand pounds, and give the cheque to me. I shall have it sealed up in the charge of my solicitor. When the proceedings are over and we are married I will give you the cheque back. You can destroy it, and no one but ourselves will know that it has ever been in existence. You must see that it could only become known—as it would do—in the event of your playing me false after I have risked and lost everything for you, a contingency which prudence forbids me to believe quite impossible. And now, please, you must say yes or no, because we have gone quite far enough, and my interesting invalid only gave me an hour for my stroll in the cool of the evening under your protecting escort. Doesn't that sound funny? So now, Frank, I have already said yes. What do you say?"

For just one fatal moment he hesitated, and, as usual under such circumstances, in that moment he was lost.

"Yes," he said, speaking quickly and a little hoarsely, "if I must, I must. I can't lose you now that I have so nearly won you, so give it to me and I will do it. Have you got it with you?"

"Yes," she said, taking out her purse and giving him a little slip of paper, pale green on one side and pale pink on the other. "A thousand pounds, mind, payable to yourself, and crossed. You will give it to me to-morrow, won't you? If the imitation is not good enough you will have to try again, mind. You have got plenty of specimens to work by."

When Frank Meredith reached his room some three hours later, having seen her ladyship back to her apartment and taken leave of her husband, he set himself to work without delay on his terrible task, and after several trials succeeded in making an excellent imitation of Sir George's signature on the cheque, and an equally good imitation of his figures and writing in the necessary places.

"There," he said, "I think that will do," when he had blotted it, and carefully destroyed the blotting-paper and all the experimental copies he had made beforehand. "At any rate, it is good enough for the purpose, for, after all, it is only to satisfy her. It wouldn't be very much use to her for this to be found in her possession, or even with her solicitor.

"She doesn't seem to know it has to be presented before there is any crime, and as she can't present it, and I won't, I

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don't see that there is any great danger in it after all. It's a funny whim, though, even for a woman to have. Fond and all as I am of her, I don't altogether like the want of confidence it shows. Hang it! I've half a mind to tear the thing up, and have done with it now. But no, I've too nearly got her now; I can't lose her. I'll give it to her. There can't be any danger in it, for she stands to lose more than I do; and, of course, I shall marry her when it is all over, so she couldn't betray me."

He met her after breakfast the next morning, and found an opportunity of giving her the envelope containing the cheque. As she took it she looked at him in a fashion that set his blood on fire, and said, very sweetly:

"Now I see that you trust me as much as I trust you We are going to Paris this evening by the night mail. I suppose we shall see you, as arranged, in about a week's time?"

"Yes," he said, "I won't make it longer, you may be sure."

And so they parted.

It was just a week after that Mr. Frank Meredith called on Sir George and Lady Chesnil at the Hotel Bristol, only to receive to his astonishment and dismay a curt "Not at home" from Sir George's English valet. He called again, with the same result, and then he wrote to Lady Chisnel, imploring her for an explanation. The letter came back unopened, and the same day he met Madge and her husband in the Champs Elysées and they cut him dead. There could only be one explanation. Her ladyship had been fooling him all the time, and must in some way have played him false in the matter of the cheque.

That very same evening her ladyship was sitting with Sir George in their private sitting-room with a number of cheques and a bank-book in front of her, for she already managed all her husband's private money mattersfor him.

"What is this, George?" she said picking up a cheque and staring at it in well-simulated astonishment. "What on earth did you owe Mr. Meredith a thousand pounds for?"

"Mr. Meredith! A thousand pounds! Nonsense, little woman, nonsense! I never owed him or paid him a sovereign in my life," replied her husband.

"Oh, but here is a cheque in what certainly looks like your handwriting for a thousand pounds in his favour, and it has been paid. Look at it."

Sir George took the slip of paper with trembling hands and looked at it closely for a moment. Then he gave it back, and said, testily:

"That's not my writing, Madge; I think you ought to know better than that. I never wrote it. It's a forgery. And so this precious acquaintance of yours, Mr. Meredith, would seem not to be content with trying to tempt you from your duty and honour, but he must try and rob me as well. Send for Charles, and tell him to telegraph to the bank at once."

This was done, and before noon on the following day a telegram came back from the manager of the bank, saying, first, that the cheque had been received in the usual way through the clearing-house from Mr. Meredith's own bank, that inquiries had been made there, and that he was told that a cheque had been received from Mr. Meredith in St. Malo, wrapped in a sheet of note-paper on which was scribbled: "Herewith cheque £1,000 to credit.—F. M."

Sir George, acting under the advice of his wife, at once communicated with the police. The offence had been plainly committed on French soil, and the offender was therefore amenable to French law. Within less than an hour Mr. Meredith was arrested and taken before the *juge d'instruction*. He protested his innocence, denied all knowledge of the cheque, and so was put back pending information from England.

The next day two clerks came over, one from Sir George's bank and one from Meredith's. The former repeated the substance of the telegram in evidence; the other produced the envelope and a sheet of note-paper, which had accompanied the cheque, and said in explanation that Mr. Meredith, travelling about a good deal as he did, and drawing his income from various sources in consequence of his investments, some of which were known to be loan transactions, frequently sent in odd cheques like this when he happened to be staying in a place where the English banks had no branches, and, therefore, they considered the affair to be quite regular.

If the writing on the envelope and the paper were not his, it was a wonderfully good imitation of his hand when he was writing in a hurry.

In the end Meredith was sent to trial to the Correctional Tribunal, and on hearing this he first offered to pay the amount of the cheque to stop proceedings, and when this was refused, as it was now impossible to do it under French law, he lost his temper and told the whole story, which, of course, her ladyship had only to deny indignantly for it to be thoroughly disbelieved. The Correctional Tribunal sent Mr. Frank Meredith to hard labour for four years at Toulon, and when at length he came out, broken in health and ruined in reputation, to find the money that he had worked so hard for deprived of all its best powers of benefiting him, he received, on the day after his arrival in England, a letter addressed to him at his solicitors. The address on the envelope was type-written. He opened it, and inside it was a sheet of paper with these words, also type-written, and without signature:

"The law has no punishment for the crime that sent to his death the man you must often have thought of in your cell. It was only a lie that you told him, but it killed him, for it made him believe that he had lost, and lost to you, what was far dearer than life to him. He wrote me the story that night, but I was too late to save him; you know that I only found him dead. My marriage was a loveless one, but it was honourable. How far I was from dreaming of letting you dishonour it you may, perhaps, be able to guess, now that you have suffered something like the punishment which your crime deserved."

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A Bit of Blue Chiffon.

"In the first place," stated Miss Lamson, with a mischievous dimple at the corner of her mouth, "the man I marry must be capable of shopping intelligently should occasion require."

Tom looked up with amazing promptness from the morning paper, which, ostensibly, he had been reading for the past ten minutes. In reality he had heard much of the lively discussion pursued by his sister and his sister's pretty friend.

Miss Lamson frequently came over from Kensington to Hampstead to visit Florence. They had persuaded her to remain last night and she had breakfasted with them this morning. Hence Tom's delay in going down to the office. He had been wishing, as he sat scanning the same news column at least twenty times, that he could discover the proper course to pursue with this extremely baffling and bewildering young woman. Doris Lamson was the most tantalising bit of femininity that he had as yet encountered.

"Would you please repeat that last statement, Miss Lamson?" he now requested.

"I was saying," replied she of the saucy eyes, "that the man I marry must know how to shop. He must, for instance, be able to match a pattern correctly."

"That, surely, would be an easy test," observed Tom with conviction. "Given the sample, a man of direct and business-like methods would have little difficulty in the matter."

"Do you mean it?"

"Most certainly. The reason you women have so much trouble is because you don't go at things in a systematic manner. Now, a man——"

"Oh, we all know what a man would do," retorted the fair visitor. "The point is, are you willing to prove it?"

Tom was on his feet in an instant.

"Do you mean that?" he asked quickly, with significance. "If so, I stand ready for a trial."

"Good!" laughed Florence, delightedly. "Let him match that blue chiffon for your blouse, Doris. You brought the pattern in your purse, you know."

"Agreed," said Miss Lamson.

Tom fingered the bit of fabric vaguely.

"How much of this cloth do you want?" he asked, as he got into his overcoat.

"Cloth!" repeated both girls, laughing hysterically.

"There's a man for you, Doris," cried Tom's sister. "Any kind of goods—veiling, chiffon, net—all of it is cloth to him."

"What shall I say?" demanded Tom, with dignity.

"Well, this is chiffon, sir. Pale blue chiffon. Be sure you get just that shade. Three yards, please. Don't forget. It is for the accordion pleating, also for a finish at the cuff."

"All right," interrupted Tom hastily. He began to feel a trifle uncomfortable. "I'll take an hour off this afternoon and get it for you." Then, brightening suddenly, "May I bring it over to you this evening, Miss Lamson—you'll be at home?"

"Well, you could have it sent, you know," she flashed back roguishly.

"Now, Doris, stop teasing," remonstrated Tom's sister. "Yes, Tom, you may take it to her. So now go."

The thought that he had actually received this commission from Miss Lamson sent a warm glow to his heart. He felt quite like a benedict, when, that afternoon, he found himself at the silk counter of the shop he had entered.

"The third counter on the right hand side of the next room but one," said the assistant to whom he had shown the pattern.

Tom proceeded in the direction indicated, and after devious windings and turnings found himself in the department. Keenly aware that his customary "direct and business-like methods" were failing him at this critical point, he retraced his steps and began a series of inquiries at various departments. He found fancy hosiery, linings, silks—everything but chiffon. Finally a pitying shopwalker rescued him and piloted him to the desired haven.

And now for business.

"Can you match this?" inquired Tom, briskly.

The young woman in attendance was sure she could. "Ah, yes. Here it is. Just the thing, isn't it?"

Tom looked at the goods she was unfolding. He felt the need for firmness. He hated to contradict her ladyship, but it must be done. He told her as politely as possible that the two shades were widely dissimilar.

"I'm sure you won't be able to match it any nearer than that," she averred, quite undaunted. "Now, we have that exact tint in other materials. How about liberty silk, gauze or——"

"No, thank you," said Tom, hurriedly. "Nothing will do but this very cloth."

Confound it, he had said it again! He was sure, as he turned away, that he heard her laughing behind his back.

He had less difficulty in finding the chiffon counter at the next shop. A tall young lady with a large pompadour and faultless finger nails took the pattern and bestowed upon him a glance of lofty serenity.

"We don't keep this shade," she informed him. "It isn't worn this season."

"It is the shade I want," said Tom, icily.

The young lady unbent sufficiently to exhibit some of the new shades.

"This," she indicated, "is an extremely pretty thing—the very latest."

"But," protested Tom, "it doesn't match the sample."

The young lady mused for a moment.

"Did your wife want it for a blouse?" she inquired at length.

Tom blushed furiously. "Y—yes. That is, she has already part of it, and——"

"Well, I'll tell you what you might do. Suppose you get enough of this for an entirely new blouse, and let her use what she has for something else."

Tom began to mop his forehead.

"How is the blouse made?" pursued the young lady, sweetly.

"I—I'm sure I don't know," he stammered in alarm. There was only one thing to do, and Tom did it. He secured the pattern and bolted, conscious that a politely astonished pair of eyes followed him even to the door.

At the next place he encountered a professional hypnotist in the disguise of a counter jumper. At least that was the conclusion Tom reached—afterwards. He was sure that nothing else could ever have induced him to commit an act of folly while fully conscious of it. When this assistant said, with finality, "Here is just what you want. How many yards, please?" Tom meekly answered "Three." He stood dumbly by and saw the shears flash through the fluffy fabric. The deed was done.

Out in the daylight he opened the parcel. Oh, the sickening difference! Miss Lamson's was a soft, dull blue; this had a greenish tinge!

Tom walked on miserably. One thing was certain. He would not, could not face her with that awful greenish blue chiffon. He obeyed his first wild impulse and slid the parcel into the pillar box at the corner.

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"How would you like to be the postman?" was the hilarious thought that darted through his brain. He could afford to be happy now. That leaden weight was out of his pocket.

He could now start afresh. At the very next shop he met with success. He found the exact shade of the sample. It was really wonderful how perfectly identical the tints were. He started for the Underground with a step as light as air. He smiled behind his newspaper all the way home.

Florence had gone out for dinner, so he had to dispense with her congratulations.

When he called at Miss Lamson's that evening his face was radiant.

She opened the parcel with bright, eager eyes.

"Ah, you did get it, didn't you?" she exclaimed. Then her expression changed suddenly. "Why, I told you to get chiffon!"

"Well?" gasped Tom, in horror.

"This is mousseline de soie!"

"Muslin—muslin de what?"

Tom sank dizzily into a chair. He had a vision of whirling clouds of blue chiffon. Then he heard Miss Lamson's voice. There was a little tremble in it. "Poor boy! You needn't feel so dreadfully over it. I know you tried awfully hard—and——"

Tom looked up. Something in her eyes made him bold. "Doris!" he cried. He put his arms round her and she did not resist.

"Dear Doris," he asked humbly, "will you accept a man who loves you very dearly, even though he can't match a pattern?"

Miss Lamson's reply sounded rather muffled, but Tom was satisfied.

Angela Morgan.

THE MAID OF THE MOUNTAIN.

A Tourist's Pretty Love Adventure.

"Don't you think so?" repeated Jack, sitting up and leaning on his elbow. I grunted assent and pretended to fall asleep.

I was fifteen years older than Jack and had promised to be his guide, philosopher and friend. His mother was particularly anxious that during our tramp in the mountains, he should see nothing at all in the shape of a woman, and think of nothing more exciting than fishing and photography. He had been deeply interested in a city belle the winter before, and she had turned him off in such a cruel, calculating way, that he was not the same man for months after.

It was early morning, and we had thrown ourselves down on a grassy ledge, after a steep climb up the mountain side, and were preparing to rest, when my young brother-in-law had caught sight of a female figure, standing perfectly motionless under an elder tree. We were too far away to distinguish many details, but could see that the woman was young and slender, was clad in pale lilac and was looking down the steep roadway.

The wooded hills made a good background, the girl's attitude expressed anxious expectation, and her pose was certainly graceful and unstudied. Jack asserted that she made a picture worth painting, and then finding I did not assent with enthusiasm, he left me to my nap and went a little nearer to the picture.

I must have fallen into a genuine doze, for the next thing I knew, Jack was sitting beside me again, breathless and excited, as if just returned from a tour of discovery. I glanced across the gorge; the female figure was no longer to be seen.

"Have you been over there?" I asked, and he nodded. His blue eyes were dancing with delight.

"Such a face!" he cried; "such hair, such colouring! I was quite near her before she dreamt of my existence, and when she saw me she gave a little gasp and fled like a deer. There's not a house within ten miles except a miserable little hut, only one storey high, down there by the brook, so that must be her home. Just to think of that lovely creature living in these wilds! Why, Will, if she were properly dressed she would look as well as the greatest lady in the land!"

When he stopped for breath, I hastened to refer cynically to the favourite heroines of magazine fiction—those phenomenal creatures who, born and reared in the atmosphere of squalor and illiteracy, to say the least, develop all manner of delicate feminine graces when the handsome young tourist comes along, and who usually die for love of him, or from a sense of duty, on the last page of the story.

If he thought to have the girl in the lilac gown as the central figure in his views, he was sadly disappointed, for she seemed to guess his intention and to be possessed of a wild terror at sight of the camera. When we had made several futile attempts to surprise her at a distance, we decided to strike camp, as it were, and stroll over to the little hut in search of dinner. Jack went first and I followed.

As I walked up, I made up my mind that if a closer acquaintance with the maid of the mountain did not serve to dispel his delusion, I would telegraph to his mother. We came, we saw, but we did not conquer.

The young woman was looking down the road again, with her hand shading her eyes, and her ragged sleeve falling back from her shapely arm. The arm, however, was decidedly sunburnt; her hair was coiled up in a slovenly fashion, and held by two pointed twigs, and her eyes were fine, I could not deny that. We had hardly time to take in these details when she saw us coming, and hurrying into the little hut, shut the door with a very decided slam.

"Her manners have not that repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere," I murmured, as Jack's tall, lithe form went swinging after her, but he tapped at the door as gaily as if he had not received a snub. I, more modest, kept back and did not hear the dialogue which took place, when an old woman appeared in answer to repeated knocks. I saw, however, by her gestures and expressions, that she was deaf. In a few minutes Jack came back to me saying:

"They will give us something to eat, but we cannot go in. It is a wretched hovel, only one room, with a curtain of some kind strung across it. I saw an old man inside, and he said we could get all the meals we wanted down at the 'Corners.'"

I remarked that as soon as we had lunched we would go to the same "Corners," for a post-bag was due there, and I was anxious to have news of my little girl. Jack looked at me suspiciously, and exclaimed:

"The child is all right. What is the use of your tramping all the way down the mountain again for a letter? I'll not go with you, old man."

My brother-in-law looked so determined that I knew persuasion would be in vain, only strategy would answer the purpose, so I answered:

"Very well, wait for me here if you'd rather," and at that moment the deaf woman brought us some sandwiches on a tin plate, and returned to the hut without speaking. We lunched in thoughtful silence, and Jack saying suddenly, "I want to send a letter," pulled out his writing materials, wrote hurriedly, and then handed me a letter directed to a bookseller in London.

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"Whatever is he up to?" I wondered, as I set off. After a long walk I reached the "Corners," a hamlet consisting of twenty houses, at one of which a diminutive post-bag was left twice a week. Hardly waiting to read my wife's letter, which was awaiting me, I hired a horse and rode at top speed to the neares ttelegraph station which was five miles distant.

The message I sent would have seemed quite simple to most persons, but my wife has a wise little head and I trusted to it. "Is your mother well? Telegraph," I said to her, and in a few hours I had her answer: "Mother not well, come at once."

Just what I wanted! My Nell scented danger in the air and rose to the occasion. She is a wife in a thousand. I turned back at once, reached the "Corners" before midnight, secured a bed in the farmhouse post-office, and at daybreak went up the mountain.

I found Jack asleep in a shed near the little hut, and as soon as he awoke I discovered that he had been enjoying himself in my absence. He expressed no surprise at my having been away so long, but began talking about that girl as soon as his eyes opened. He had learnt that her name was Mildred, for someone in the house had called her.

She had come out several times to look down the road, as before, and he had caught some fish in the brook and presented them to her, and she had cooked them divinely and brought some out to him for supper, and he had thanked her and gazed at her unrebuked, and had talked to her several minutes as she stood before him in the gloaming, while the leaves on the trees whispered all around them, and the brook gurgled melodiously and the moon came out.

It had evidently been very pastoral and poetical, and I was determined to get him home, so I handed him his sister's telegram and began packing up our traps. He was silent for some time, but I knew what was passing through his mind. As soon as his mother got well, he would come back to the maid of the mountain.

So I was positively glad when, on our reaching home, I saw the doctor's carriage before our door. My wife had shown the telegram to her mother and the dear old lady had worried herself into an attack of nerves. We all agreed that Jack must take her abroad with some friends who were crossing next week. In the midst of preparations for departure, I saw my brother-in-law directing a package of papers to Miss Mildred Mason, the "Corners," and I exclaimed in surprise:

"How did you find out her name?"

"Oh, I managed to get it out of her mother, the deaf woman," he answered hurriedly; "and I am sending something to the girl in the way of literature. I have ordered the bookseller to send her an interesting paper or book every week while I am away. Her mind must be yearning for food."

I was thankful when the boat started.

In accordance with my advice Mrs. Hathaway stayed abroad for two years, and I was glad to find, when they returned, that Jack seemed much older and more sensible, in fact quite heart-whole and fancy free. He made no mention of that girl, so I concluded that he had forgotten her.

Very soon after his return, however, we all happened to be asked to go down to Southampton on a friend's yacht to see some races. There were many people on board whom we did not know, and just as the principal race began, my brother-in-law came up to me in great excitement, whispering:

"She is here!"

"She? Who?" I asked, and he replied:

"The maid of the mountain, and lovelier than ever—come!" In desperation I followed him to the other end of the yacht and saw a very beautiful girl, dressed in perfect taste, whose face seemed familiar.

"It is Mildred Mason," said Jack, "but what a change! I told you she needed only proper toggery—I must hunt up someone to present me," and he was off. I was lost in wonder. Jack must have made a mistake. I asked some one the name of the pretty girl who was now talking to my brother-in-law.

"Oh, that's Miss Ashleigh," was the reply, and I chuckled with delight. She and Jack remained together the whole afternoon and I hovered near and wondered. They were quite oblivious of my existence, however, and I could not help overhearing their talk. After a pause, she said:

"I suppose, Mr. Hathaway, you are wondering where you and I have met before. I should not be surprised if you had forgotten all about it, for you must have often been out fishing in the mountains, but it was my first and only adventure and I shall never forget it. I should have enjoyed the sensation if I had not been so worried about mamma."

Jack and I both listened spell-bound.

"You see, she sprained her ankle, besides inhaling a great deal of smoke, and was suffering from shock, and I thought my father would never come. More than a day and a night we passed in those woods alone with the Masons."

Jack's interest in her words were entirely unfeigned. I could see that he was longing for more light on the matter, and I admired his tact, when he asked:

"How did it happen?"

"A defective flue, I believe," said she, taking his question in a restricted sense. "Mrs. Mason was lighting the kitchen fire, and did not know anything was the matter until the flames were beyond control. Mamma and I were awakened just in time to rush out, and we lost all our clothing. I had not even a hairpin.

"The people at the 'Corners' came to our rescue, but mamma could not get further down the mountain than that wretched hut where you found us. I was dreadfully afraid you would photograph me in that old lilac gown that someone had lent me."

"Had you been living there long?"

"Yes, all summer, and every summer for years. It was a charming spot and such a picturesque old house. I had painted a number of views and we were just thinking of going back home when we were burnt out.

"My father arrived on the second day with our clothes and our doctor. Do you know, Mr. Hathaway, my mother and I were so glad you stayed there that night, though we could not cultivate your acquaintance. Mamma will be delighted to hear I have met you. What is that? A photograph of me in that lilac gown! How did you manage to take it?"

"It was two years ago to-day," he said earnestly, "and the picture has never left me." His next words were spoken so low that I did not catch them. Just then there was a sudden excitement around us. The race was over, but I am sure that neither of those two knew or cared which boat had won.

The next day Jack Hathaway had the effrontery to tell me that I had been an idiot to suppose for an instant that Miss Mildred Ashleigh was anything but a lady born and bred, just because she wore a ragged gown—he, with his superior power of discernment, had taken in the situation at a glance.

Isabel Smithson.

Pencil-cases for Everybody!

Every person who distributes fifteen little illustrated leaflets about our new serial story, "Out of Great Tribulation," to fifteen different people, will be presented with a beautiful little silver-plated pencil-case. Write a postcard for conditions and a parcel of fifteen leaflets to the Publisher, *Short Stories*, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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Helen's Lunatic.

Helen Dacy went to Alton—not because she was insane, but because she had a second cousin who was. Alton is a beautiful town, but its tramway service is not good, and Helen walked through the village up to the pleasant park with which the State has surrounded the asylum for the insane. It is a walk of considerable length from the gate of the grounds to the building, and Helen was to encounter a melancholy sight. As she went along the serpentine path, a procession came towards her. There must have been a hundred men in it, and they walked slowly and most of them with bowed heads.

Their feet appeared to press the earth heavily. At first Helen thought it must be a funeral procession, but a moment later she perceived that it was something more distressing. It was the walk of those who had survived their own death. In other words, it was a body of insane patients, exercising the bodies that held their perished minds. Helen shrank aside and stood fascinated while they passed her. Some of them looked at her curiously, or with lacklustre gaze, or wistfully. A sudden appreciation of her own youth and health and sanity came over her, and made her feel all the more pitiful.

The procession had passed, and she was about to resume her way to the hospital, when one of the men quitted the ranks and walked hurriedly towards her. None of the rest looked round. The attendants had not noticed his desertion, and his steps on the sward made no sound. He came with a rapid, gliding step towards Helen, showing his teeth in a broad smile. Helen decided that, however impertinent his intentions might be, at least he was in good humour. This was consoling, but it did not keep her hands from turning cold with nervous dread.

As he approached he lifted his hat with a courtly air. It was evident that the poor wretch had once been a gentleman, but even the most gentlemanly of lunatics was not a companion to choose, and Helen moved behind a low lilac bush. She felt that she was white and that her eyes were wide-stretched, but she tried not to show her alarm. Confidence, she had always heard, was needed in dealing with the insane. The man moved more cautiously and fixed an undeviating gaze upon Helen.

"Madam," he said, in a peculiarly quiet voice, "it is a pleasant morning."

Something in the words suggested a scene in *Hamlet* to Helen, and she bethought herself of an experiment. She would soon determine whether or not the man had a gleam of reason.

"Is it?" she asked, turning her eyes to the sky. "Why, indeed, I thought it was raining!"

The man had a look in his face akin to pity. "Perhaps you are right," he replied gently. "It may be raining. It is not always possible for me to tell except when I see people carrying their umbrellas."

"Sensory nerves quite obtuse," thought Helen. "I have heard that it is common with degenerates." The man moved a little nearer, and Helen ventured to go still further behind the lilac bush. He stopped still, and they faced each other over the low shrubbery. What an agreeable looking creature he was, with his soft brown eyes, his long, delicate face, and his high brow. He looked as if he might have been intended for a poet. Probably he had been, but had gone one step further. Helen had not read Lombroso for nothing. "Do you ever write poetry?" she asked with genuine curiosity. The man blushed. Helen had not dreamt a lunatic would blush.

"When I find a fitting subject," he confessed.

"Ah! And what would you consider a fitting subject?"

"'Why—you!" The words came out explosively. They did not seem to be meant for a compliment. The man spoke pathetically. It seemed as if there were tears in his eyes. Helen answered as if he were a child.

"Do I seem so sad to you?" she asked. "Does it make the tears come in your eyes to look at me, poor man?"

"Indeed it does," he replied quite simply. "I think you are the saddest thing I ever saw."

"I wouldn't die for anything," she explained. "I like to live. I find plenty of things to laugh at." And to convince his wandering wits that this was the truth she broke into a merry laugh, which astonished the melancholy spirit of the place.

"If I give you my hand," said the man kindly, "will you not walk back with me to the house?"

To take his hand, to let him get a hold upon her! It was ghastly. He moved towards her. There seemed nothing for it but to run, and run she did, speeding over the soft lawn with a rapidity that astonished herself. She could hear him calling to her, but she sped on, till, finally, a hysterical impulse, borne of her fright and fatigue, took hold of her. She began to laugh again, and the musical, half-weeping laughter floated behind her as she fled. Then, breathless, she stumbled over a hill and fell flat. She buried her face in the grass and waited, her heart paining with the stress of its work. A second later two arms were about her and she was lifted to her feet.

She faced the lunatic. They were of a height, and they stood looking at each other, both of them pale and trembling, his arm still supporting her.

"Poor child," he murmured, "how sorry I am that I frightened you. Perhaps I ought not to have run after you. But I was afraid you would leave the grounds and come to some harm."

She would have liked to have explained to him that one need not come to harm outside the grounds, but perhaps it was as well that he thought otherwise. She would tell him the truth about herself. Perhaps he would understand. Ah, what a pity that such an engaging face should hide a ruined mind!

"You must try to understand," she said slowly, "that I do not live here in the—in the hospital. I am here for the first time. I have not yet been up to the—the building, you know. I came to visit a relative who is here. It seems a pleasant place. Have you been here long?"

"My dear young lady!" cried he, "I also am a visitor. I also came to visit an acquaintance, with whom I was walking a moment since. I approached you to ask if you knew when the next train went to town, but when I addressed you I judged from your reply that you were one of the inmates."

Helen sank gently down on the grass.

"I think I must rest a moment," said she. "I—I am much surprised!" Her tone indicated something more than surprise. It confessed to a great relief. She paid her visit to the asylum and she and Victor Law, her lunatic, went back by the same train together. To both of them the afternoon had seemed the most interesting of their lives.

"Why were there tears in your eyes," she asked before they parted, "when you talked with me at first?"

"Why, it seemed to me that I had never encountered anything so sad as a shattered mind behind eyes so—please, pardon me—so beautiful as yours. I know I am rude, but I must speak the truth. If you had been mad, I should have remembered you with sorrow all the days of my life."

"Being sane, I suppose you will forget me?"

But she knew well that he would not give himself the opportunity. She was quite certain that she should see him often. It would have been a grotesque anti-climax not to have met again after that afternoon.

D. C. L.

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A GOOD-NIGHT KISS.

The Romance of a Hospital Ward.

The doctor had made his last visit for the night and the nurse was left alone with her patient—a typhoid fever patient, muscular and raving. It was a private "contagious" ward, a room that was always like a ship's deck, cleared for action, with its metal bed of white enamel, its metal table and its grey-green wall, decorated only with "coloured supplement" prints, because these could be changed frequently and burnt easily. It was a room of a dim light and a tempered shadow—one of those bare hospital rooms where you feel that the flame of life, though it burns low, burns without a flicker, being protected and watched in its feebleness with no sentiment of love, but with the skilled care and the cool eye of unimpassioned science.

The nurse sat at the bedside, her hands folded in her lap, like a nun at meditation. There was something nun-like in her face, in its placidity beside such suffering, in the almost melancholy sweetness of the face of a woman who had looked many times on death alone at midnight, and who had lived for a long year now in the constant companionship of pain.

But, indeed, the expression belied her. She was watching her patient for signs of distress, listening intently to his breathing, with the subconscious alertness of the engineer who will sit musing with an eye on the steam gauge and an ear strained for the slightest change of note in the regular swing and cadence of the machinery. The poor fellow in the bed tossed and muttered fretfully. She soothed him with her voice—with a murmur of "Yes, yes. Go to sleep, then. Go to sleep," as if she were talking to a child. There was no sign of nervousness or anxiety about her. Only once, when she rose to take his pulse, she stood a moment to smooth down the stiff apron of her uniform with a slow palm, in an endeavour to loosen the starch in it so that it would not rustle. The patient was making a dry clutching in his mouth. She took a piece of ice from a bowl among the medicine bottles and glasses on the table and put it under his tongue. He sighed a breath of grateful weakness.

She stood looking down at him, smiling with a motherly pity. His eyes were closed.

He had been as self-willed in his illness as a spoilt child. He had been almost convalescent when, against all warning—while the day nurse was chatting with the doctor outside the door—he had staggered from his bed to a basket of fruit on the table and eaten two peaches before he was seen. The result was a relapse into a far more critical condition than he had been at first. Here he lay now, struggling against death itself. She wondered whether he had a sister who was fond of him—or a sweetheart?—who had been sending him these baskets of fruit.

He was breathing regularly in a fitful doze. She returned to her chair and leant forward to look at him with her chin in her hand.

Although she was not aware of it he had changed for her; from being a "case" he had become a human being with a claim of interest on her, and she frowned at his muttering of pain. Poor fellow! Life must have been so full for him of interests, activities, promises, achievements. To have it all end this way, futilely! He had given the college cry once in a delirium and struggled, panting, through a football game. And once he had been standing on the platform of debate. Another time he had been writing on an examination in law. And still another time she thought that she heard him speak Jim's name in the jumble of delirious mutterings.

Jim was to have been a lawyer. Poor Jim! Her eyes filled at that old, tear-stained memory of Jim and her father drowned together in that horrible accident on the *Princess*. Well, she at least had not been a burden on her mother's small income, and soon—as soon as she had qualified at the hospital—she would be not only self-supporting but an aid to the others. There were two long years of hard work before her yet. She bit her lip.

The untiring run and babble of his delirium had been growing louder. She went to him again to calm him with the sound of her voice, and he looked up at her with a smile that seemed almost rational. It was only momentary; he called her "Auntie," and began a childish prattle.

"I'm not sleepy," he said. "I don't want to go to bed, auntie," and tried to raise his head from the pillow.

She took her cue from him.

"Yes, you are," she cooed. "Go sleepy-bye. Auntie'll tuck you in."

She arranged his blankets about his shoulders, patting and smoothing them down.

"Night-night," he said contentedly. "Kiss me night-night."

She touched his forehead with her finger tips.

"Ssh," she said, and bent down to him. The tall screen at the foot of the bed hid her from any one who might pass along the passage. She touched her lips to his forehead. "Night-night," she whispered.

He looked at her with a childish smile pouting his lips. It hardened slowly into a pursed mouth of perplexity.

"Hallo, old man," he said. "Whore——"

He closed his eyes on a frown.

She was still blushing hotly when his regular breathing showed her that he had fallen into a quiet slumber.

* * * * * *

He was sitting in his arm-chair taking a sun bath at a window that looked out on the dazzling white of melting snow. His visitors had just left him, at his doctor's orders. He was waiting for the return of "Nurse Blakely," with an impatience which he might have recognised as longing, if his physical weakness had not disguised affection in him as an irritable lack of what he wished to have. She came in light-footed.

He crowed a feeble "Ah-ha! Did you hear what the doctor said?"

"What did he say?"

She arranged his pillows to ease the strain on a weak back. He was grateful for that, and his gratitude shone in his smile.

"I'm to be humoured, the doctor said; I'm to have my own way in everything."

"Are you?" she said, avoiding his eyes. You certainly had your own way about the fruit."

He laughed now at the folly that had kept him a happy prisoner in the hospital for the past nine weeks. "That fruit!" he said; "that was the most delicious—the most—— Do you know, Nurse Blakely, I thought those peaches would kill me, but I was dying for something to eat—and I just took them." She did not reply. "A man's a fool when he has a fever, isn't he?" he added, with apologetic seriousness.

"Only then?" she retorted with obstinate flippancy.

She was busying herself about the room. He was watching her every movement with an eye of invalid tenderness.

"Oh, I say," he protested, "you don't make any allowance for a fellow being ill!"

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"Oh, you're well on the way to health," she said. "We'll soon have you back to your friends——"

"Nurse," he said, "you're the best friend I ever had—or want to have."

Her cloistered loneliness rose on her in a surge of bitterness.

"Wait till you've been away from here about a month. One feels very dependent and—and affectionate when one is ill. It soon wears off."

"That's the way you always talk," he said moodily. Then, brightening, "I'll report you to the doctor. You're not humouring me."

She did not answer. She smiled, having warded off the danger which his milder manner had warned her of. She seated herself in a chair and took up a book which she had put down on the table when his visitors had entered.

"What's that?" he demanded peevishly. "What are you reading?"

"Don'ts," she answered laconically.

"Don'ts?"

"'One Hundred Don'ts for Nurses,'" she read from the cover. "Things we are not to do."

"Well, don't worry. Your sins have been all of omission. It's the things you have not done——"

She smiled serenely at the page.

"You might read it out, at least," he said,

"Let me see." She turned the pages. "I think that is probably included in the prohibitions: Don't let others know the secrets of the profession."

He clutched the arms of the chair.

"You're teasing me. Let me read that book or I'll get up."

She laughed and passed it to him. He began to read:

"Don't sit in a rocking chair and rock while resting." "Don't injure the furniture in any way, and be careful of all fancy decorations." He looked about him. "The wreckage has been appalling in this palatial apartment." He read again. "Well, great Eli!" he cried, and looked up at her. "Why, it was you!"

"What was?"

"Come here, please."

She went to him. He pointed with a thin finger to an accusing "Don't kiss your patient."

She flushed under her dainty Swiss cap.

"Not even delirious patients?" he inquired.

She turned her back on him and went towards the window.

"Not even those who have an illumination of reason?" he persisted. She could find nothing to say. "Do you know," he said, "I've been puzzling over it ever since. It was just before I fell asleep and woke up to my senses again. At first I thought it was my aunt who brought me up, and then suddenly I thought it was an old chum of mine at college. You look very like him. Why, your names are the same. Was Jim Blakely a relative of yours? He was drowned——"

She turned on him with a cry of—

"Jim—Jim was my—my dearest brother."

"Good Heavens," he gasped, and tried to rise. He sank back weakly in his chair and sat there staring at her. "What a chump I am," he said at last. "So you're little Marjorie." He remembered Jim's picture of her in his den. "How proud he was of you." The thought of her position there then came to him in a shameful contrast. "What a brute I've been," he said, "and what an angel you've been here. To let you wait on me hand and foot like that."

Her back was to him. She stood looking out of the window. Her hand was within his reach, and he took it.

"Do you think," he said, "being Jim's chum, you could ——" He touched his lips to the palm of her hand—"forgive me? Could you?" She tried to free her fingers. "Take care," he warned, "the doctor said I was to be humoured."

She laughed, and that weakened her defences. He caught her other hand.

"You're a brick, Marjorie," he said.

"Let me go," she said sobbing. "I—I want to wipe my eyes, you silly."

Her tone was itself a surrender. He lay back and smiled with content into her wet eyes. For he had won.

J. M. R.

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Write down in the spaces provided the names of all those rivers you can discover. If you can't find all, put down as many as you can.

NOTE THESE FACTS:

1. Names must be written in ink.
2. Only one name is allowed against each set of words.
3. When you have filled up your list, cut it out and keep it by you until one more list has appeared.
4. You may send in as many sets of lists as you like, but each set will be accepted independently, and must be pinned together.
5. In the event of the prize being divided, only one share will go to each successful competitor, no matter how many duplicate attempts he may send in.
6. No competitor may receive the assistance of professional competition solvers whose advertisements appear in the Press. Every person who enters for this competition must do so only on this understanding, and those selected as winners may be asked to satisfy us that they have not contravened this condition.

The first prize of £10 will be given to the reader from whom we receive coupons containing the greatest number of correct solutions. The second prize will be given to the sender of the next most nearly correct solutions, and so on. In the event of a tie, the prizes will be awarded at the discretion of the Editor, whose decision is final.

THIRD LIST. Cut to edge—>

Example:

To flow gently..... Ouse.

31. A river dam	**31**	.....
32. Balanced cargo	**32**	.....
33. Dread	**33**	.....
34. A towering flight	**34**	.....
35. Excommunication outwitted	**35**	.....
36. Pale viper	**36**	.....
37. To merit by labour	**37**	.....
38. A mound of large stones laid in the sea before a port, for protection	**38**	.....
39. To make neat	**39**	.....
40. The third consonant	**40**	.....
41. Lean on	**41**	.....
42. A tree esteemed for its stateliness	**42**	.....
43. To reclaim	**43**	.....
44. Husks of ground corn	**44**	.....
45. To draw with the mouth	**45**	.....

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Cut to edge—>

The result of the First Name-Hunting Competition will be published next week.

A Modern 'Portia.'

The Story of a Woman's Wit.

CHAPTER I.
Mr. Laban Spencer's Opportunity.

"Now, you're quite sure, Evans, that your information is correct? That this fine gentleman—this Honourable Rollo Middleton, to wit—is really cornered for coin?"

"Yes, sir. It seems that he's been dabbling in stocks and shares, and has got badly nipped. I understand that he's looking round for accommodation. Fisher—Slater—Mendel—he's tried 'em all, but none of 'em 'll touch him. Why?—because they all know that Lord Minsterley has the absolute free willing of his money, and (so they say that ought to know) is not over sweet on his first-born, the Honourable Rollo, owing to the young man's obstinacy in the matter of Ivy Meade."

"The actress?"

"Yes."

"What has she to do with young Middleton?"

"Do you mean to say, sir, that you haven't heard?"

"Heard what?"

"Why, that he's over head and ears in love with her, and she with him. The old lord has come to hear of it, and is using this monetary disaster of his son's as a lever to bend him to the parental will."

"And the youngster—won't budge, I suppose, from his position?"

"Not an inch! He defies his father, and threatens immediate marriage with his sweetheart."

"He's a chip of the old block, then, for if I don't mistake, the Baron himself ran away with his wife."

"That's right, sir, and people are saying that the son is but following in the father's footsteps."

"I hope he will, Evans; I hope he will. I want him to, and it's you that have got to keep him to the sticking-point!"

"Me, sir!" cried Evans, in unhappy amazement. "What can I do?"

"Much. You don't appear to comprehend my drift."

"No, Mr. Spencer, I can't say that I do."

"You can't? Don't you remember how this young blue-blooded puppy has, up to now, persistently declined my overtures, business, as well as social. Can't you call to mind how, only last summer in this very room, he insulted me! Me, Laban Spencer—who, if I chose, could buy up, twice over, his father's miserable acres, and that without turning a financial hair.

"It wasn't his own bill he had come about, I know, but that scoundrel, Piffler's, of the Guards Yes, I hate him! because he would have no business dealings with me. Said that money-lenders were the bane of Society, and should not be suffered to exist within a mile of honest men. Yes, I tell you, I hate him! and will make him smart, so sure as my name is Laban Spencer!"

Both men carried the proof of their Semitic origin in their faces. True, the Jew sought to hide itself under Gentile style and title, but it was a sorry disguise, and deceived nobody.

The scene of the conversation was the private den of a pretentious suite of offices in a certain street in Piccadilly. "Spencer's" (popularly known as the "Spider's Web") was as familiar to West End impecuniosity as was its own lack of the golden "medium." The den of the "smart" money-lender, with its setting of ormolu morocco and Turkey pile, had heard related within its four walls more "Society" secrets, more compromising revelations of ruinous prodigality, than any place of its size in London, or, indeed, the Kingdom.

It had ever been Laban Spencer's desire to get Lord Minsterley's son into his financial mesh, but Rollo Middleton hated and despised the wily Israelite, and refused response of any kind to every proffer of friendly accommodation.

The man was ambitious for social status, and his scheme to secure it was as undoubtedly original as it was daringly unscrupulous.

A widower, he looked to his only child and daughter, Miriam, as to the one who should enable him to take his place among the "great."

With this end in view he had educated her; with this end in view he had endeavoured to prime her with that which passed with him for "Society" lore and tradition.

That he had not succeeded in this to his complete satisfaction was a source of almost savage irritation with him, with the result that the girl's life became a burden and a shame to her.

Miriam Spencer was not fair, as men count fairness. Short of stature, swarthy, and with a painful hesitancy of speech and manner, she possessed no personal attraction for the average man. She had been referred to among the money-lender's clients as "Spencer's Pill," inasmuch as it was well-known that he could gild it with more than the usual money-in-plenty.

That she was womanly and sweet-tempered went for nothing, alike with father and clients, seeing that such things have no appreciable market value.

Strange to say, Laban Spencer was inclined, with all his eager greediness for even standing-room in the "charmed circle," to be over nice in the selection of a husband for his daughter, and a sharer of the good things attached to the skirt of the prospective bride.

Many there were who would complacently, and even joyfully have swallowed the "pill," for the sake of the gold therewith. But Laban would have none of them. There was one man, above all others the most unlikely and unapproachable, upon whom he had set his apology for a heart.

It was the day when Rollo Middleton was seeking to negotiate further renewal for his craven friend Piffler's bill, that Laban Spencer, thinking the time favourable, hinted his desires to his visitor.

"Sir!" said the young man, in indignant reply to the other's unblushing proposal for an amicable exchange of commodities.

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"I pity your daughter—pity her from my heart. It so happens that I have heard of her, and, let me tell you, in such a way as makes me to have the truest admiration of, and respect for her. She herself would be the last one to indorse such a confessedly huckstering proposal as yours.

"Your money is never going to buy you into a class for which you are no more fit by nature than is the man who buys my cast-off coat at the area-gate."

"You are rude, sir! and—and I refuse to renew Lieutenant Piffler's bill. You may tell him so; and that I shall let the law take its course."

"Ah! in that case," rejoined Rollo Middleton, with cutting emphasis, "I will take up the paper myself, so, if you will hand me over the bill, I will give you my cheque."

It was then that Laban Spencer's visitor gave vent to his somewhat forcible opinions with regard to money-mongers and their ways.

"Very well, sir! Very well! You have seen fit to flout me, not only personally, but in my business capacity. Some day you may need my good offices. May come crawling and whining for—for old Laban's shekels. Well, we shall see! we shall see!"

"I will take your word for it, Mr. Spencer, but you may as assuredly take mine—that of my own free willl I shall never come to you for even so much as a brass farthing. Good morning!"

That was a year ago; and it was not to be wondered at, knowing the man, that Laban Spencer's fingers itched to avail himself of the opportunity for revenge, now, as he deemed, within his reach.

It was quite true that Rollo Middleton was, financially speaking, in sore straits. It was equally true that his father, unable to shake his son's determination to marry Ivy Meade on a paltry income of four hundred a year, had issued instructions to his solicitors to prepare a new will, absolutely disinheriting the young man.

Then it was that a mysterious bill cropped up—£5,000, face value—purporting to be accepted by Rollo Middleton in favour of Alwyn Piffler, and held by Laban Spencer as security for £4,750 advanced to the drawer.

The first Middleton heard of it was from the solicitor who was conducting his case in bankruptcy; said solicitor, Frank Meade, being the brother of the leading lady at the Odeon.

"But, my dear fellow, it's a fraud! Why, I've only put my hand to paper of that sort once in my life, and I redeemed the bill—for £500—on July 17th last year."

"You're sure of that?"

"Sure of it! Mr. Spencer and I have, each of us, good

"Very well, sir! some day you may come crawling and whining for—for old Laban's shekels."

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reason, I think, for being absolutely certain on the point. I ventured, on the occasion of redemption, to express myself—well—not over politely, perhaps, with regard to that gentleman's methods and profession generally. I don't fancy that he can have forgotten the circumstance; it must, therefore, help him to remember the monetary transaction. It's odd, though, that this bogus bill—for it is a bogus bill—should bear another nought, isn't it?"

"Another nought! I don't quite follow you."

"Why, Piffler's bill was for £500. This precious document, you say, is for £5,000, the adding of a nought is easy—to some people—and, to my shame, I confess to having torn up, without looking at it, the paper Spencer handed to me."

"Then you think——?"

"That the old rascal passed off upon me a duplicate, which duplicate I destroyed, and threw into his own waste-paper basket. The original bill he has kept, altered, and has now produced, to hamper and disgrace me at a moment when, so to speak, I can't turn in my own length."

"By Jove!" cried the young lawyer, looking admiringly at his client and friend. "It's just possible!"

"It's more—it's as surely certain as that you are sitting where you are."

"Well, I'll see what I can find out. Are you going to the *première* of the *Merchant of Venice* to-night at the Odeon?"

"Do you ask! Ivy declared this morning, when I saw her for a moment at the theatre, that she wouldn't be able to get through unless she knew I was there. That's the only thing that is taking me, for this new enemy to fight, in the shape of old Spencer and his spurious bill, has taken all the steam out of me. Here! hold a moment! Meade! I verily believe we can get to the bottom of this business."

"Yes! How?"

"You know—no one better—that Ivy has made a friend of old Laban's daughter, Miriam. The girl is a good girl, and would lay down her life almost for Ivy; it may not be very good form, and I hate doing it, but after the show to-night I will ask Ivy to find out from her, if possible, anything that may help us in getting at the truth."

"As you say, Middleton, it's—well—a bit shady—trying to get at the father through his child."

"So it is, Frank, so it is! and I won't do it. At all events I'll wait till I've consulted Ivy to-night after her triumph."

CHAPTER II.

The Interval Between the Acts.

The whole playgoing world was literally agog with excited anticipation.

The new Portia! Nothing else theatrical had been talked of for weeks.

So truly representative an audience is rarely to be found assembled within the walls of a theatre, as that which on the first night of the revival of *The Merchant of Venice*, filled every available nook and corner of the big house off the Strand.

In the stalls sat Rollo Middleton, anxious-eyed, and worried of look, as befitted a man who, in the natural course of events, would soon take his degree in the Debtor's University, the Bankruptcy Court.

By his side sat his friend and solicitor, Frank Meade; the brother as keenly interested in his sister's performance as the man who loved her beyond all else in the world.

A certain amount of romance must of necessity attach to every union, or contemplated union, between the "stage" and "Society"; but, apart from real, true, simple-hearted devotion on both sides, there was nothing ultra-romantic about the love-story of Rollo Middleton and Ivy Meade.

An old 'Varsity chum of her brother's, his introduction to her took place in the most every-day, conventional way, dating, indeed, from a period long antecedent to her entrance upon her professional career.

Like many another man, Rollo disliked the idea of the woman of his choice exhibiting herself to even an admiring public at so much a head. But Ivy Meade's genius, her lofty appreciation of the actor's art, ultimately reconciled him to the inevitable, and he henceforth lived but to shield her from all that must circle round her in the pursuit of her calling.

Ivy Meade was not in any sense the typical professional actress. The slang of the stage she detested, and though tender-hearted and womanly to a degree, she resented any approach to that dangerous familiarity which is the bane of the theatrical life.

Most men called her "lovely," but it remained for Rollo Middleton to discover the intangible something, and to appropriate it. Her eyes were her crown and glory—big, lustrous, and brimming with intelligence, and the spirit of a pure and noble nature.

"Middleton!" said Frank Meade presently. "Do you see who is in that box on the first tier—second from the stage?"

The young man raised his glasses, and lowered them again in an instant, without speaking.

"Well?" queried the other.

"Yes, I see. Laban Spencer and his daughter."

"Look!" whispered the lawyer hurriedly. "An attendant is giving the girl a note. Ivy has sent round for her—yes! there she goes!"

Rollo Middleton's only reply was to scribble a few words in pencil upon a leaf torn from his pocket-book, signal to a programme-seller, and give the note to her, with a coin.

"Ivy?" asked his friend.

"Yes."

"Thought so! You lovers are so uneasy, and as fidgety as—as captive Carnivora."

Directly the curtain was down upon the second act, Middleton rose from his seat.

"May be back, or—may not," he said to Frank Meade. "If I'm not with you before the commencement of the last interval, come on to my rooms after you've seen Ivy home, and wait for me."

He was well-known in and about the theatre, and passed round without let or hindrance to the back of the stage.

The leading lady's accommodation consisted of an inner dressing-room, opening out into a sort of boudoir, the latter furnished with a piano, and with feminine knick-knacks of every description.

The door of this room was wide open, and seeing no one there Middleton entered and closed the door.

As he did so, the inner door opened slowly and Miriam Spencer came through and greeted him.

"Mr. Middleton—will you mind—very much—if I see you during this interval instead of Ivy?"

"No—I—of course! but is anything the matter?"

"The matter! You mean with Ivy? No, nothing is the matter with her."

"Then it is you who are in trouble! I am sure that it is so! What is it, Miss Spencer? If there is anything in my power that will help you, just tell me."

"Mr. Middleton, I have only a few moments during this interval in which to explain myself. Ivy will see you—to-morrow morning at half-past ten by the Queen's statue in Kensington Gardens."

"To-morrow! Shall I not see her to-night—now?"

"She bids me say—no; and for reasons that you will, later on, be the first to recognise as being good and sufficient. Won't you be seated?

"In the first place," the young girl went on, her voice taking a sadness of tone that was inexpressibly touching. "I am speaking to you now as—as Miss Meade's confidential companion."

"Her what? Why, your father waits your return in front."

"Yes, yes—I know! but, nevertheless, he will leave the house without me."

"It is a riddle."

"The answer to which can best be given by my telling what I have to tell in my own way."

"One moment, Miss Spencer. Has Ivy said anything to you—given you any message from me?"

"No; for I anticipated her. Mr. Middleton, to-morrow morning you are to be examined in Carey Street, are you not?"

"I believe so."

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"And you have information that a certain bill for £5,000, bearing your signature, will then be produced as an after-proof, should you succeed in arranging with the schedule creditors for a satisfactory composition, and a consequent annulling of the bankruptcy proceedings."

"Yes, quite correct," replied Rollo, curiously amused at the young girl's business-like way of putting things.

"You also know, I think, that—that this new creditor is Laban Spencer, my father?"

"Yes, I know that; and, for your sake, I am heartily grieved."

"It is kind of you so say so, and I know your sympathy to be sincere; but let it pass, please; my trouble is my own, and as such, I will bear it—alone."

"Go on, please."

"Now, this—this bill; do you know of it, acknowledge it to be yours?"

"No, Miss Spencer, I most certainly do not."

"I am quite aware that you do not, though I asked you the question."

"Then why—who——?"

"Why—I don't exactly know; but who—who converted the five hundred pound bill into the five thousand pound one? Who fabricated the spurious copy of the original, palmed off upon you on July 17th last year? I can gratify your curiosity on those points! Oh, yes—I can tell you that!"

She ended with a semi-hysterical sob, and Rollo Middleton pitied her from the bottom of his heart.

"Don't tell me," he said quietly, "if it will hurt you."

"But I must. You will never guess who did those things I speak of—but who, thank heaven! is not responsible for the wickedness of them."

"My dear Miss Spencer, even if it were your—your——"

"My father! no, he did not do it; and yet, he is responsible! I—his daughter—say so, because I—his daughter—fabricated that false bill! I—added four thousand five hundred pounds to the value of the real bill!"

"Miss Spencer! You! You are ill—or dreaming!"

"No; I am well, and—awake." Then she went on with strangely sudden calmness.

"The man Evans, my father's confidential clerk, is an expert hypnotist. I am, alas! what is called a good subject. At what I now know to be my father's instigation, Evans threw me into the hypnotic state, compelling me, while under his influence, to do the things I have told you of."

"The scoundrel! but where is he?"

"He absconded this morning. Why, I do not know, for, until a quarter of an hour ago, when I sent a note to my father, I have said nothing to anyone."

"He must be found!"

"He must! and that, Mr. Middleton, is your task, with the help of Mr. Meade."

"I will go back to him at once."

"No, no! please do not! Do not enter the front of the house again. I have strong reasons for asking this. Can you see Mr. Meade at your rooms to-night?"

"Yes; I have arranged to meet him there about midnight."

"Then do so, and discuss with him the best way of securing, as speedily as possible, the person of Richard Evans. Miss Meade and I have a plan in another direction, about which you will hear to——"

"Rollo!"

He turned sharply at the salutation to meet the presence of as gracious a Portia as ever trod boards.

"I couldn't let you go without a word," she said, putting both her shapely little hands into his extended big ones.

"I oughtn't to be talking to you now," she went on, "for the coming 'trial scene' is haunting me."

"Never mind that, dear," he said. "Do not speak a word; it is good just to look at you, and to hold your hands."

"Is it? Has Miriam told you?"

"Yes. And I can't realise it even now."

"Don't try to do so, dear; but if you are to play up to me in a little drama I have in rehearsal for to-morrow, follow Miriam's advice, and, if possible, find the man Evans."

"I am afraid it is more easily said than done."

"Difficult, yes! And now, I shall be called in a couple of minutes. To-morrow morning, at ten in the Gardens."

He kissed her, and made for the door. Then something impelled him to turn and say to Miriam: "I won't hold you to this, if it hurts you—it is your father, you know."

"That is past," she answered him. "I am no man's

"I—his daughter—fabricated that false bill!"

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A bubbling rush of incoherent sound issuing from his ashen lips, Laban Spencer fell forward over the witness-box rail.

daughter. I am just Miss Meade's companion, and—forgive me, please—your friend!"

CHAPTER III.
"A Daniel Come to Judgment."

Upon the next morning after the revival of *The Merchant of Venice* at the Odeon, Ivy Meade's Portia was the dominant subject in literary and artistic circles, and, indeed, with men generally.

When, therefore, it was rumoured in the City about midday, that the famous actress was in the neighbourhood of the Law Courts; was, in fact, at that very moment in the stuffy atmosphere of the Bankruptcy Court in Carey Street, excuses galore for special leave of absence were hatched up, and before half-past one the court was crammed to overflowing point by every clerkly male who could get his nose in.

Rollo Middleton and Ivy Meade had met as arranged in Kensington Gardens, but even then the latter would not divulge the secret of her plan with regard to Rollo's affairs.

It was, therefore, more than a surprise to him to find, on reaching Carey Street, that Ivy, in company with Miriam Spencer, was comfortably seated near to the witness-box.

He was about to make his way across the court to her, but refrained in response to a pretty little repelling gesture. This she tempered with a smile that almost reconciled him to doing her bidding.

"I don't see Laban Spencer here," said Frank Meade to his client. "I wonder how he means to play the game!"

"Well, he can't play it at all, I take it, if he does not show up," replied Rollo.

"That's what I mean. But—confound it, there he is! just coming in now! Old Carter with him, too—the rankest old rascal on the Rolls. With Evans unfindable, I'm fairly beaten as to what we're going to do. You object—and I think rightly—to my calling Miriam Spencer. She's our only card, and it would be disgracefully ungenerous to play her."

"Of course that's understood."

It did not take long for the Schedule creditors to agree to a composition of ten shillings in the pound, and the Registrar was about to declare the annulment of the bankruptcy proceedings, when the bolt fell.

"I, sir," said Mr. Sam Carter (of Carter and Wells, solicitors), rising and addressing the Registrar, "I have a claim to mention, unscheduled owing to——"

"Whom do you represent, Mr. Carter?" asked the Registrar.

"My client, Mr. Laban Spencer."

"'Um!" remarked the Registrar drily. "Go on, sir."

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"I produce, and put in as a proof of claim, a bill of exchange for the sum of five thousand pounds, and accepted by the Honourable Rollo Middleton."

"This is rather unusual, Mr. Carter. Why was the claim not made before?"

"I was about to explain, sir, that we were not duly advised of the course Mr. Middleton's affairs have taken."

"That, sir, is no excuse at all, and I am not disposed to help you out of any difficulty you may find yourself in through failure to act at the proper moment."

The bill had been passed up to the Registrar, who, after glancing at it, was about to repass it down to the clerk below him.

"One moment!"

It was a lady's voice that rang clearly and self-possessed through the court, as Ivy Meade stood up and faced the bench.

"Madam, who are you? I am afraid I cannot hear you."

"Kindly postpone that decision until Mr. Laban Spencer himself has from that box sworn upon his oath that that bill is a genuine bill, that the signature of Mr. Middleton is also genuine, and that the amount appearing upon the bill ought to be five thousand pounds and not five hundred."

"This is most extraordinary and irregular; what is that you suggest, madam? But, first, what is your name?"

"Ivy Meade, and—and I am a personal friend of Mr. Middleton's."

"Miss Meade, you honour this court by speaking in it. Tell me, please, what do you suggest in connection with this bill?"

"Before I answer, I should like to ask you, sir, in the first place, to retain possession of the document; and, secondly, to see that Laban Spencer does not leave this court before he has answered one or two questions I propose to put to him."

White to ghastliness, apprehension showing in every facial line and feature, the old moneylender stepped into the witness-box.

Sworn, he was addressed by the Registrar.

"Mr. Spencer, as it seems that there is something about this bill not quite that which you claim for it, I have decided to allow this lady to ask you a few questions, in the interests of truth and justice. Now, Miss Meade."

"Mr. Spencer," said Ivy, "did Mr. Rollo Middleton call upon you in the forenoon of the seventeenth of July last year, and redeem a bill for five hundred pounds, drawn by Lieutenant Piffler, and accepted by himself?"

"Yes—he did."

"Very good. Now, with regard to the bill for five thousand pounds which you now produce against Mr. Middleton's estate, when was that negotiated?"

"Two months ago to-day—the twentieth of September."

"Ah! then how comes it, that on that day you were not at your office—that you were not in London, but in Paris?"

"I was at my office. I have not been to Paris this year."

"No? Well, tell me this. Why did you on the fifteenth of July last year, and again on the eighteenth of September last, request your man Evans, a well-known hypnotic expert, to exert his influence over your daughter, Miriam, so that while in the hypnotic state, she might respond to his will, and on both occasions produce fac-simile copies of original documents."

"No—it is a lie!"

"Where is the man Evans now?"

"I do not know."

"Is it not a fact that he left London yesterday morning at your request?"

"No."

"Then you still adhere to your statement that this bill is a genuine bill, and that Mr. Middleton's signature as acceptor is genuine also?"

"Yes, I adhere to that statement."

"Then I will ask the Registrar to call Miriam Spencer."

What followed was almost melodramatic in intensity of situation.

Throwing up his hands; a bubbling rush of incoherent sounds issuing from his ashen lips, Laban Spencer fell forward over the witness-box rail.

Confusion reigned supreme.

The court was immediately cleared of all except those immediately concerned.

Three hours afterwards startling head lines appeared on all the newspaper contents bills.

"Sudden Death in Court
of
Laban Spencer, the Moneylender.
Scene in the Bankruptcy Court.
Ivy Meade Cross-Examines.
'Portia'
In Real Life."

* * * * *

City men talk of the Middleton bankruptcy sensation to this day, and of the bit of real drama played then on the Carey Street stage.

Of course it was a splendid advertisement for the Odeon; the business done being phenomenal.

Lord Minsterley is still unreconciled to his son, even though his son's wife is a woman whom playgoers worship, whom other women envy, and whom her husband adores.

Ralph Enderby.

A Paying Game.

Little Boy: "I saw you kiss sis, and if you don't give me sixpence I'll tell." Young Man: "Here's the tanner." Little Boy: "Thanks. That's £1 I've made this month."

Out of the Mouth of Babes.

Mother: "Bobby, come upstairs this instant and change your shoes and stockings." Bobby: "They isn't wet." Mother: "Indeed they are; just soaking. I can hear them 'sop, sop, sop' whenever you walk." Bobby: "That Sis and Mr. Nice-fellow in th' parlour."

Very Strict.

"Your friend Miss Blank seems a very strict teetotaler," said a man, commenting on a girl who had refused to eat plum-pudding with brandy sauce. "Strict doesn't express it," replied the girl's friend. "Why, don't you know she's that particular she won't heat her curling tongs over a spirit lamp?"

NEXT WEEK'S COVER OF "SHORT STORIES" WILL BE A REMARKABLE ONE.

A Lengthy Process.

Mr. Bingo: "We may as well talk over this question of getting the house painted." Mrs. Bingo: "But, my dear, it doesn't need to be painted for at least a year yet." Mr. Bingo: "True. But you have got to decide what colour you want."

A Sensible Girl.

He (timidly): "Now that we are engaged, I—I presume I may—may kiss you as much as I please, mayn't I?" She (encouragingly): "Yes, indeed. Make the most of your time, dear. There's no telling how long an engagement will last nowadays, you know."

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A Matter of Trust.

"WILL you trust me, Fanny?" he cried passionately, grasping her hand. "With all my heart, Augustus, with all my soul, with all myself," she whispered, nestling on his manly bosom. "Would that you were my tailor," he murmured to himself, and tenderly he took her in his arms.

Birdies Both.

"WHAT are the names of that newly-married couple in the next flat?" "Oh, we can't find out for a few weeks. Each one calls the other 'Birdie.'"

That Heartless Editor.

AMBITIOUS MAIDEN: "It's too bad. The editor sent my beautiful and pathetic story back without reading it." Fond Mother: "Dearie me! How do you know it?" Ambitious Maiden: "I've looked all through every page and there isn't a teardrop anywhere."

Hardly a Love Match.

MISS SMILAX: "And so Miss Passe and Mr. Gotnix really got married. Was it a love match?" Mary: "On the contrary, I should call it a hate match." Miss Smilax: "Why? I don't understand you." Mary: "Why, she hated to be an old maid, and he hated to be poor."

Hard to Satisfy.

MR. THRIFTY: "Doctor, I don't think much of that cough medicine of yours." Dr. Curem: "I am very sorry to hear that. What is the reason?" Thrifty: "Why, there is so much of it dead waste." Curem: "Dead waste!" Thrifty: "Yes; I hadn't taken more than a quarter of the bottle when my cough had gone, and there is the other three-quarters thrown away."

Knew How to Manage Him.

MRS. BRIGHTON (who wants a new hat very much): "I say, hubby, I've got to have a new dress. Don't you see how shabby this one is getting?" Mr. Brighton (very much frightened): "A new dress! That will never do. Money is very scarce. If you had said you wanted a new hat I would not have objected, but a new dress is out of the question." Mrs. Brighton: "All right, I suppose I shall have to be satisfied with a hat, but I can't help being a little disappointed."

Cautious This Time.

MAUDE: "George, I don't think I ought to marry you, for I don't believe you love me one bit." George (ardently): "Why, my darling, I am passionately, desperately, madly in love with you. I worship the very——" Maude: "You talk well enough, George, but those letters you wrote to me when away were so cold and distant they froze my heart. One would think you were writing to your washerwoman about her bill." George (slowly): "Maude, I—was—engaged—to—a—girl—once—before, and when she sued me for breach of promise all my letters to her were—read—in—open—court."

His Mission in Life.

"MY wife is a lecturer and I am an entertainer," said Hobbs. "Indeed, I knew your wife appeared in public, but I did not know that you ever did." "Oh, I don't I stay at home and entertain the baby."

Still Leading.

JAWKINS: "How's Henpeck getting on since his marriage? He used to vow that no woman could ever get ahead of him." Hagg: "Oh, he's still leading, I suppose; but she's behind—holding the reins."

Good Enough for Him.

THE LADY: "Jack, why don't you write a book, or paint a picture, or do something clever?" The Gentleman: "Because I selected a millionaire for a father, and I think that was clever enough to last a lifetime."

Taken at His Word.

HE (after marriage): "What! you have no fortune? You said over and over again that you were afraid someone would marry you for your money." She: "Yes, and you said over and over again that you would be happy with me if I hadn't a farthing. Well, I haven't a farthing."

After Five Years.

HE (five years after): "All this gush about love is extremely silly. Wherever did this stupid book come from? I must say the person who selected it showed a very insipid taste." She (quietly): "It's the book you gave me during our honeymoon, John; we read it eleven times the first week we had it." (Prolonged silence.)

Still Wondering.

"YOU say you want to marry my daughter. Have you spoken to her?" "Yes, sir," replied the young man, "and have gained her consent." "Well, if she has said 'Yes,' that settles it. Anything I might say or do wouldn't have the slightest influence." Then the young man went home and wondered if he was not too young to marry such a girl.

Wrote for Cash Only.

MR. RHAPSODIE (to Miss De Rhyme): "I've longed to meet you for some time, Miss De Rhyme; I dote on poets. They tell me you write poetry?" Miss De Rhyme: "Yes, I do." Mr. Rhapsodie: "How nice. Where do you publish your poems?" Miss De Rhyme: "In the newspapers and magazines." Mr. Rhapsodie: "Ah! and what subject does your muse love best?" Miss De Rhyme: "Oh! any patent medicine or soap, or perfume—anything that produces the hard cash." Mr. Rhapsodie faints.

Excusable.

A YOUNG man had met a girl in a lonely place and forcibly kissed her. She was terribly indignant, and had him arrested. She gave an account in the witness-box of how he gazed at her intently, and then, suddenly throwing his arms round her, imprinted a kiss upon her lips. The prisoner made no defence, and the jury was expected to promptly convict him of assault. They returned to the court-room. "The ju-ju-jury w-w-would like to ask the young lady two questions," the foreman said. The judge consented and she went on the stand. "D-d-did you wear that dress that you've g-g-got on now?" "Yes, sir," was the demure reply. "And w-w-was your ha-ha-hair c-c-curled like that?" "Yes, sir." "Then, your lordship, we acquit the p-p-risoner on the ground of emo-mo-tional insanity."

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TOO MUCH BUSINESS.

The author and manager were going over the play together, strengthening its weak points, and getting it into shape for presentation.

"I don't think," said the latter, when pressed for an opinion, "that the stage directions are quite explicit enough. I think it would be a good idea to write in the 'business' a little more fully."

"Perhaps you're right," admitted the author. "What in particular would you suggest?"

"Well, in the first act, where the heroine comes romping on the stage, I would have her father put his arms round her and kiss her."

"Do you think that is necessary?"

"Well, yes. It will show his love for her, and make his grief seem more intense when she runs away with the hero."

"All right; I'll do it. What next?"

"When the hero makes love to her, and she seems undecided, his arm should quietly steal round her waist."

"Ought I to write that in?"

"Certainly. All the business should be written in."

The author said, "Very well. I'll attend to it. Anything more?"

"Yes, Her brother would treat her most affectionately. She's supposed to be a great favourite of his, you know, and when he gets home on his furlough this greeting should be most loving—kisses and all that. That will make the situation stronger when he starts out to kill the man who has run away with his beloved sister."

"Meaning the hero."

"Yes; and when she agrees to elope with the hero, she should throw herself into his arms, and he should fairly smother her with kisses. It will make a beautiful picture. A pretty woman throwing aside all reserve and surrendering herself to her gallant, noble lover."

The author pushed away the manuscript and asked, with suppressed emotion:

"Any more 'effective' business for this heroine?"

"Oh, yes. When the grand reconciliation comes, and the hero is found to be a good man, and all ends happily——"

"I draw the line there!" exclaimed the author, fiercely. "Do you realise that the heroine is to be played by my wife? Do you think I'm going to write out a license in this manuscript for every man in the case to fold her in his arms and kiss her? No, sir, I won't do it! We'll lop out some of this 'business,' or the heroine will be indisposed on the opening night."

O. P. W.

IF YOU'VE FAILED

in business, it's perhaps because you have taken up the wrong work. You should ascertain from an unbiassed person the real bent of your mind, and to do this you should send a specimen of your handwriting to *RANEE, 32 Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.*, inclosing six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope.

A NEW DEPARTURE.

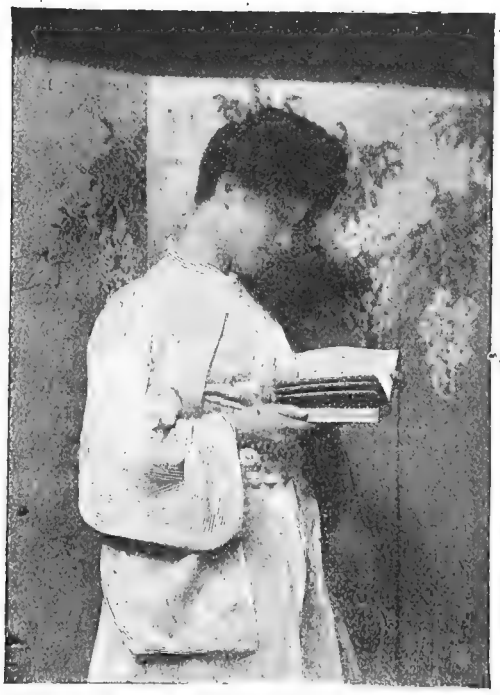
The Lady's Magazine for May is a number which should not be missed, for with this number begins quite a new departure. The magazine is very much enlarged, it is printed throughout on the best paper, in good type, and with the very best blocks.

The reason for this enlargement is to improve the Magazine, and to make it of more practical use to readers. Had it not been enlarged we should have had to sacrifice some of the features which are now so popular with its regular readers.

There will be a large section devoted to stories and storyettes; there will be a most excellent serial, and in addition to the ordinary articles there will be the following regular features:

Health and Beauty, Mothers and Children, Stage Favourites, Etiquette, Home and Table Decoration, Dress and Fashion, Playtime, Law and the Lady, The House Beautiful, Servants, Girl's Interests, Cookery, Women's Employment, Gardening, and Toilet.

Now, just a word about the lady who is writing the present serial, of which the first part appears in the May number and is concluded in June. Miss Onoto Watanna is a



charming Japanese girl (only in her twenty-third year). She was born in the flowery land of the chrysanthemum, her father an Englishman in the Consular Service and her mother a Japanese. She began writing at the age of fifteen, and has since that time found a public only too ready to read everything that comes from her pen.

The story she has written for The Lady's Magazine is the daintiest thing possible, and everyone who reads it will fall in love with Yuki, the little Japanese heroine.

Answers to Correspondents will appear in The Lady's Magazine, and every letter received will be answered, providing a stamped addressed envelope is inclosed. The Editress is only too glad to give information on any subject, and will welcome letters from her readers.

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IN THE TOP GALLERY.

A Casual Meeting and its Consequences.

Max Dourkard knew the dirty streets of London, knew its smoke-begrimed sky, knew its cheap lodging-houses, and, in fact, most of its "seamy side." He also was intimately acquainted with the garden implement department of a great business house, because he was engaged there six days of the week.

On Sundays he read the paper, ate a little more than usual, and took a lonely walk in the afternoon. He had an idea that everyone was not leading that sort of a life. There was a look on some of the faces that he met which indicated that there was more in existence than he had yet discovered. So far as he was concerned, the world was rather a plain place. There were moments, of course, when it was better, as, for example, when a band came playing down the street, or when the day was bright, or when he met a beautiful girl, or when the streets were all gay for a festival, or when he saw a crowd of people pouring out of a great church. But the band passed in a moment and was gone; he could not stay away from his task to enjoy the beautiful day, the lovely girl did not look at him, in the streets no one spoke to him, and he had not the soul's courage needed to go with the throng and worship in the church.

On Saturday night he left the office too late to go "home" for his dinner, so he got a little meal at a shabby restaurant, and wandered along the street looking at the crowds. He thought he would wander towards the West End and stare at the people in the clubs and hotel windows, and at the ladies going in to the opera. The last diversion proved the most engaging, and he almost gasped with wonder at the visions he got of graceful forms in their perfumed wrappings, as they stepped from their carriages and hastened through the theatre's swinging doors. Suddenly he was seized with a bold idea. He marched to the ticket window. He asked for a ticket. It did not seem possible that it was he who had done it, but the next thing he knew, he was walking up flight after flight of stairs, and after climbing what seemed to be an astonishing length of time he found himself in a little square iron balcony fairly overhanging a part of the audience—an audience made up, apparently, of midgets, judging from their appearance as he looked down upon them.

It was quite dusky where he sat, but he was able to make out the faces about him. They were not just the sort he had expected to see. He had been in high galleries before, but he had never seen in such a place the delicate, gentle faces he saw about him there. He was not experienced, but he knew these people instinctively for students of music, or young college men, or true music-lovers. An old man with long, venerable locks sat in front of him; on one side was a young man with a brow that was almost too lofty, and long, white, nervous hands, which, when the music began, seemed to involuntarily play the theme upon an imaginary piano. The seat on the other side of Max was vacant for a time, but finally it was occupied by a young girl, who was accompanied by a boy several years younger than herself. She took off her little felt hat and put it in her lap, revealing a head of auburn curls, and she drew off her shabby gloves and her little jacket, and adjusted herself comfortably. Then she looked about her smilingly, unfolded her programme, and bent herself to its study. Little exclamations of pleasure burst from her.

"It's just the cast I wanted," she said to her companion, who was evidently her brother. "It is going to be a great night, Tom."

Tom nodded, moved a little closer to his sister, and they sat still as statues while the wild, elate overture of the *Valkyrie* burst upon them. Max was bewildered. For a moment he seemed to recoil from this tumult of sound, as a timid swimmer might from a vast inrolling line of surf. Then his soul struggled up to meet the waves of harmony, though at times they seemed almost to beat him down. And at last the curtain rose and the strange mythical music-play began.

Max did not understand. The tongue was that his mother had taught him first, and the words came to his comprehension but not the sense of the story. He emitted a sigh of dismay. The young girl next him heard it. She looked at him quickly, smiled, and looked away again. But between the acts he was to be unexpectedly enlightened.

"Is this the first time you have seen this opera?" she asked brightly of him.

"It is the first time I ever saw any opera. I don't understand it very well."

"No? I didn't either at first, but now I love it more than anything I know of. It seems like another world than that I have to live in at other times. Would you like me to tell you the story of the *Valkyrie?*"

It seemed a century since anyone had spoken to him as kindly as this girl was doing. She had a pleasant face, with large, red-brown eyes, and a long droop to her lashes.

"I wish you would tell me the story," he said. But he had no idea that it was going to be such a beautiful story, or told in such a delicately modulated voice as it was. The relation of the tale seemed almost as enchanting to him as the music that followed. The girl with the glowing eyes called his attention to the different motives as they glimmered out of the fabric of the music. Under her tuition, what had at first appeared to be a marvellous confusion of wonderful sounds began to take on a majestic coherence—it was a new world but an ordered one. It seemed to Max as he listened that the loneliness and littleness of his life slipped away from him, as the skin of a serpent is sloughed off with the new season. He stood attired in new glittering garments of knowledge and joy.

"You must come on Monday night," said the girl at parting. "It is to be *Faust*, you know, and that story means even more than this. It seems to me everybody has a bit of *Faust* in him. I think it is one of the greatest stories in all the world."

"You know a great deal," said Max. "I don't see how you could have learned so much when you are—are so young!"

"I know about the things I love, but some things I cannot and will not learn. You ought to know my mother. She knows much."

"I wish I might see your mother," said Max, wistfully. "I have no mother."

"Haven't you?" asked the girl, sympathetically. "My mother is coming on Monday night, and perhaps—perhaps she might ask you home, you know."

"Oh!" cried poor Max with perfect naïvete, "I wish she would."

And shortly afterwards he departed for his lonely home.

* * * * *

It was Monday night, work for the day was finished and Max, trembling with subdued excitement, was hurrying towards the opera-house. He had never before known a Sunday to seem so long in passing, but now the longed-for moment was at hand. He eagerly scanned the audience, but they were not there. Yes, they had just arrived and she—she was smiling with pleasure. That evening he paid his first visit to her home, but it was by no means his last. Life is now a thing altogether different to him and his days of loneliness are now reckoned as days that are no more.

H. Parker.

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BANKS'S TELEPHONE.

"Alfred, my dear," said Mrs. Banks, as they sat at breakfast one morning, "I do wish you would get a telephone fitted up in the house, and I could speak to you at any time when you are in your office. Don't you think now that it would be just lovely?"

Alfred was not quite convinced as to its loveliness, but he meekly assented, on the principle that it would have to be done in the end since Mrs. B. had set her mind on it. Accordingly one morning some workmen came in, and the telephone was fitted up.

For the next few days poor Banks had very little peace. When he was very busy and pondering deeply over some intricate subject that telephone bell was sure to ring, and when he had rung back and adjusted the apparatus he would hear something like this, "Alfred, dear, aren't you glad you have got the telephone? It is working beautifully. I've just been over to Mrs. Fitzjohn's and she hasn't got one, and didn't I crow over her." Whereupon Alfred would mutter something (outside the instrument) not fit for the ears of Mrs. Banks.

This sort of thing went on for about a week, Banks getting thinner and more absent-minded as the days went on. But telephones are ticklish things sometimes, as the sequel will show.

One morning while Banks was having an interview with his friend Berryson, the telephone bell rang violently. Banks said, testily:

"Oh, bother that confounded thing. I say, Berryson, just ring up and tell my wife I'm busy. I'll attend to her presently."

Berryson complied, and Banks resumed his calculations.

We say Berryson complied, but he only had time to ring the bell, when he heard the following:

"I say, Alfred, Mrs. Berryson has just been in, and she mentioned that you had invited her husband and a few friends to dine with us to-morrow night. That's all very fine, but what did you mean by asking them without letting me know? And where do you suppose the wine is to come from that these horrid creatures will require? As for that Berryson, it's well-known what he is. He's the greatest glutton I ever saw. I tell you what it is. Just write and let them know that other engagements will prevent the dinner."

"What's she talking about?" inquired Banks, looking up for the first time from his papers, and surprised to see Berryson still at the telephone. But his amazement was complete when Berryson darted past him without a word, and left the office, banging the door after him. Then Banks went to the instrument, and, well——

N.B.—That telephone has never been used since.

C. L. L.

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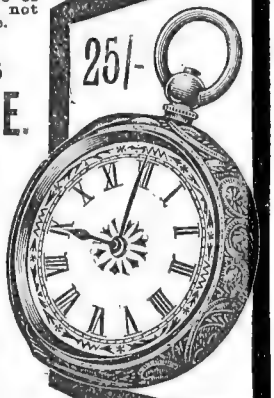

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CHAPTER XXV.
"By Her Brother's Hand!"

"This man is Felix Cordelvin, *not* Anthony!"

As Dr. Branksome uttered the words Inspector Trench and Gerald Mortimer started back in amazement. They looked at one another and they looked at the doctor. Strange and mysterious as had been the circumstances leading up to this discovery, the expectation of anything so inexplicable as this had never entered their minds. And, as is very often the case, the sudden explosion of an unsuspected mine of truth, startled them into silence. None of the three could for a minute or two utter a word.

At length the detective broke the silence with a commonplace inquiry.

"Are you quite sure, doctor?"

"Absolutely," returned Branksome; "the face and the eyes especially are unmistakable."

Gerald Mortimer found his tongue at last.

"If that is all, Branksome," he said, "I think you may very easily be mistaken. I am informed that both Felix and Anthony resembled one another very closely."

"But I am——"

"Then," continued Gerald, almost triumphantly, "there is the matter of the arm. This man you see is minus an arm; he must be Anthony. Felix Cordelvin had both arms intact, had he not? At least, up to the time of his escape."

An exclamation broke from the detective, as if prompted by a sudden flash of intelligence.

"Mr. Mortimer," he observed, "you know more of the Cordelvin family history than I do. Can you tell me how and when Anthony Cordelvin lost his arm?"

"It happened about twenty-five years ago, as I am informed," Gerald replied. "A railway accident, I think, it was, led to the amputation."

"Thanks. Then, Dr. Branksome, I want to ask you something. Is an examination of a joint sufficient to enable you to fix the date of an amputation."

"Hum! it depends. You see——"

"I don't mean exactly, but approximately. Could you tell the difference between an operation performed twenty-five years ago, and one performed a few months since?"

"Assuredly. The appearance of the cuticle would be entirely different and the nerves would——"

"Then will you kindly," interposed the detective, "have the goodness to examine this gentleman's arm?"

Somewhat puzzled by the drift events had taken, Dr. Branksome walked over to Cordelvin and stooped down.

Ever since the entry of the three men he had maintained a kind of sullen silence, and now as the doctor asked him to remove his coat, he complied without opposing by word or gesture. The coat was removed, and the shirt rolled back over the arm, disclosing the stump closely enveloped in a short, tight-fitting singlet sleeve. With his penknife the doctor ripped this open and examined the shortened limb.

His inspection lasted but a few seconds. But as he looked his brows contracted, and when he turned to look at the two who eagerly watched him, it was with an expression of the utmost gravity.

"Inspector," he began. His tone was harsh, as of one speaking from a dry throat.

"Well?"

"There has been——" He stopped suddenly.

"Foul play?" suggested the detective.

The doctor nodded. "Yes, that is what I was going to say. This is Felix Cordelvin without a doubt, this arm has been amputated *within the last few weeks*, in fact, since he left the asylum."

Hardly had the last word escaped the doctor's lips than a violent change came over Cordelvin. Up to that moment he had remained seated on the damp floor of the cellar, sulky-looking, it is true, but tractable enough. Now, however, he sprang up, his eyes flashing with fury, and his whole demeanour betokening great mental agitation.

"Out of this, you interlopers!" he stormed; "out of my castle! Why have you come here? What right have you?"

He doubled his fist as he spoke and thumped the air in emphasis of his words. Then he went on:

"Don't you know who I am? I'm going to be Lord Mayor of London, and don't you take notice of anything Vanstone says. He's a fraud; he took me in, and he'll take you in, if you believe what he says. So out of it, I say—out of my castle."

Dr. Branksome looked at the lunatic while he thus raved. Then he made as though to speak to him, but at that moment Gerald touched him lightly on the shoulder.

"Excuse me, Branksome, but I think I can manage him," he said, in an undertone. "I am acquainted with his latest delusion."

Then, advancing towards Cordelvin, he said, with a bow:

"Pardon me, my lord, but I have brought these men here to attend to your requirements. This gentleman," indicating the detective, "is the furrier I mentioned to you. What he doesn't know about Polar bear skins isn't worth knowing. The other man is the Lord Mayor's special tailor. He wants to measure you for your robes."

Something like a smile of pleasure came over the poor demented creature's face.

"The Lord Mayor's tailor!" he repeated, chuckling as if he were hugely enjoying some joke, "then that accounts for his taking off my coat. He was going to measure me, eh?"

"Must have been, my lord," Gerald answered.

"Precisely so," broke in Dr. Branksome, now fully aware of the madman's delusion. "I just wanted to measure your lordship for your robes of office."

Cordelvin looked cunningly up at the doctor.

"Do you know, I seem to know your face."

"Most probably, my lord," returned the doctor unabashed. "I am very well known to most of the prominent men of the time. That's owing to my position, you see."

But the lunatic was not listening. His tether of coherent conversation seemed to have come to an end. He was busy with his own wandering thoughts.

"Polar bear skins," he kept murmuring. "Polar bear skins, bah! won't have 'em, won't have 'em!"

"I wouldn't, if I were you," chimed in the detective. "They're a bit out of fashion and would never do."

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"What would you recommend, then?" The lunatic was coherent again.

"If you'd only come and inspect my stock," responded the pseudo-furrier, "I'd guarantee to fit you out better than any previous Lord Mayor."

"You're my man! you're my man!" Cordelvin broke in enthusiastically. "I'll come with you. Where's your shop? I'll come now, I'm ready."

"Very good, my lord," answered the inspector, at once seeing that in Cordelvin's present mood, there was a good chance of getting him out of the house and into safe keeping. He moved a step towards Gerald and whispered:

"Get a cab—a four-wheeler, as soon as possible."

Quietly Gerald left the cellar, mounted the stairs, and departed on his errand.

A minute or two afterwards the detective, the doctor, and Cordelvin also reached the hall level. As they did so the door of the library suddenly opened, and Ruth Cordelvin stood for a moment gazing at them. Only for a moment, however, for at sight of Cordelvin the dull fire of her eyes seemed to leap into flame, and she darted towards the madman with arms outstretched.

Then a strange and fatal thing happened.

The poor, witless man, mistaking the effusive rush of Ruth Cordelvin for an intended attack, rushed forward to meet the onslaught. Ere the detective or doctor could throw out a restraining hand, the madman darted past them, seized a portable umbrella-stand from against the wall, and with all his force swung it through the air and brought it crashing down upon the woman's head. Only three words did she have time to utter ere the fearful blow felled her insensible to earth.

"Felix—my brother!"

Horrified the detective leapt at the man, the doctor bounding to the prostrate woman.

The officer pounced upon Cordelvin just as the plain-clothes man, who had been left in charge of the woman, closed with him from the other side, In thirty seconds he was secured.

"Dr. Branksome," inquired the detective, mopping his brow, and speaking in a low voice, "how is the lady?"

The doctor looked up slowly. In his eyes there was a look as of mingled sorrow and horror. He spoke in husky tones:

"*Ruth Cordelvin is dead!*"

"Good Heavens!"

"Dead!" he repeated, reverently covering the woman's face with his handkerchief. "Killed by her brother's hand!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

The Narrative of Ruth Cordelvin.

It was past midnight. Inspector Trench sat alone in his own sitting-room reading. From his apparent absorption the book he was perusing might have been an entrancing story. His eyes remained riveted on the leaves as one after another he turned them over. His pipe had passively been allowed to go out, a rare thing for so inveterate a smoker as the inspector. And yet his reading was not of fiction but of fact, strangely and sometimes hysterically-depicted fact certainly, but the real, downright, unblushing article without a doubt.

It was not print either that fascinated him. The book in his hand was a plain manuscript book, bound in shiny limp American cloth, and labelled on the outside in a sprawling, somewhat flourishing hand—

"*Diary of Ruth Cordelvin.*"

From beginning to end the officer read it through. Then he laid the book down, reloaded his pipe silently, lighted it thoughtfully, and then gave himself up to a few minutes' reflection.

Not for long, however. His mind was quickly made up. Procuring pen, ink, and paper, he once more opened the diary, and from it copied certain passages, until before him, after two or three hours close application, lay the story, a little bit erratic, disjointed, and abrupt in places, of Ruth

A Young Wife's Dilemma.

A young wife wrote the other week to the editor of a ladies' paper asking the surest means of retaining her husband's affections. The reply was "always be as attractive, look as pretty, and pay the same attention to him as you did during the days of courtship." It has to be admitted, however, that a woman's good looks are dependent to a great extent upon her health. Bile Beans for Biliousness are, in this connection, woman's greatest friend. They preserve the appetite, and thus ensure keeping up the strength. They stimulate the liver if inclined to be sluggish, thus ensuring energy and briskness. Their action on both liver and kidneys results in these organs being always regular in their action; and constipation, headache, nausea, and debility are thereby rendered highly improbable. The blood is purified, and the result of the occasional use of Bile Beans is seen in the sprightly step, the bright eye, the healthy colour, and the clear complexion. These qualities which Bile Beans ensure, go far towards making a young lady attractive.

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Cordelvin in connection with her brother Felix and the two Vanstones. Omitting dates and certain repetitions, important from a police point of view, but unnecessary for this present purpose, this is how extracts from the diary, or rather disjointed narrative, read:

"To-day my search has been rewarded. I know where my brother is. Two months have I been in England after following Felix from Melbourne. From the time of my arrival I have tried to trace his whereabouts up till to-day, without success. He is shut up in the public asylum at Moulstone, a most iniquitous confinement. Felix is not mad, no madder than I am. Excitable and strange sometimes he is, but so am I. Why should he be shut up? As his sister, I must try to get him free. I shall have to be careful though. More than once I have heard people whisper about me, have seen them look on me with suspicion and shake their heads. If ordinary people do this, the asylum authorities might if I went to them. They might declare me mad too, and have me shut up. I must be careful.

"I have been to see the house of our cousin to-day on Brixton Hill. Anthony Cordelvin is almost our sole surviving relative. He is weak mentally, it is said, but he is very rich. Anthony's wealth has always been a terribly sore point with Felix, who has never had much money. Often and often have I heard him rave against his cousin, and it was with some idea of getting hold of the property that he came to England, after a bitter quarrel with me. Now I sometimes wonder if his all-absorbing envy of Anthony may have affected his brain. Other Cordelvins, as I have heard, in previous generations have been insane. Sometimes, it is a horrible thought, but sometimes I am a little mad myself."

"Several times lately I have been to the house on Brixton Hill, that is to say, outside it, for I never venture too near for fear of recognition. They might swear I was mad, and I might be shut up like poor Felix. I have seen Roderick Vanstone, who manages the estate for Anthony. He is a crafty-looking man, a villain I am sure. I don't like him."

"A strange thing has happened. Roderick Vanstone has been to Moulstone. I followed him from London there. Why should he go there? Felix, as I have learnt, was admitted as a pauper, and no relative or acquaintance has ever claimed knowledge of him. Why then has Vanstone been to the asylum? Special permit to inspect the asylum, so the porter at the gate told me. No inquiry for any patient at all. It's very strange. If Vanstone wanted to see a mad-house, why out of the hundreds existing does he select the one where Felix is? I don't trust the man."

"Vanstone has been down to Moulstone again. Not in the asylum this time, but all round the walls. I followed him, for his movements fascinate me, and I saw him pause and look at the walls many times. What can be his object? I am suspicious of the man, he looks so crafty. Moreover, I have seen him talking to one of the warders in a wood near the asylum. What is his purpose? I must watch and watch to find out. I fear something may happen to Felix."

"I am more nervous than ever about poor Felix. Vanstone has been down again to Moulstone, and last night I had a dream—oh! such a dreadful dream, in which Vanstone killed somebody—who, I am not sure, but perhaps it was my brother, I must watch, watch, to see no harm comes to him. How I wish I could go to the asylum and tell them my suspicions of Vanstone. But that would not do. They might say I was mad, and they might have me shut up."

"Once again I have followed Vanstone to the neighbourhood of Moulstone Asylum. And once again I found him talking to the warder in the wood. This time I determined to try and hear what they had to say to one another. So I crept up, keeping well out of their sight until I got within earshot of them.

"'You have arranged it all?' I heard Vanstone say.

"'Yes, all will be ready for to-morrow night, or rather about two o'clock in the morning,' the warder answered. 'But how about my reward, sir?'

"'Well, you have had ten pounds,' Vanstone said, 'And the other ninety will be handed to you directly the business is settled. Two o'clock in the morning, you say?'

"'Yes; I will bring him to the corner of the south wall.'

"'Good, I will be waiting there to receive him.'

"There was more talk after that, some of which I could not catch, but I had heard enough to make me believe that something serious was afoot. I am greatly troubled in my mind at all this, for I feel fully convinced that whatever is going to be done, it bodes ill for my brother Felix. I have nothing definite to go upon, of course, but in matters affecting my brother I am always strangely aware of impending calamity beforehand. But I dare not talk to other people like this. They would think me mad. The only thing to do is to watch—always watch. Whatever is to befal, I must be at hand to see.

"What I suspected was going to happen, has happened. My brother Felix is missing from the asylum. Let me, for future reference, formally chronicle the events in their proper order. After the conversation between Vanstone and the warder which I had overheard, I remained near the asylum all the next day. At the beginning my nerves were none too good, my fears and apprehensions having upset me a good deal. But that day spent in melancholy and exciting vigil in the wood, scarcely touching food all the time, and not getting one moment's relief from the strain which was upon me, told its tale. By the time the night came I was quite overwrought. I seemed to lose all sense of everything except the impending something which threatened my brother. At about ten o'clock I came out of the wood where I had remained all day, and moved about among the field paths for a long time. Then, as it was getting towards midnight, I walked out on to the high road.

"I was feeling very worried and well nigh distraught. My fears magnified and distorted innocent things in the hedgerows into hideous and terrifying ogres. I trembled from head to toe: I felt that if my agony of suspense lasted much longer, I should drop down from sheer exhaustion of brain.

"Presently, there issued from the asylum gates, the figure of a man. Of course in my calmer moments I should have known the thing to be impossible, but at the moment I caught sight of him I thought the man was Felix. With my heart wildly beating I walked right up to the approaching man, and peered close in his face. He stopped and inquired in a kindly, cultivated tone what it was I wanted.

"The strange voice called me a little to myself, and I shrank back, murmuring I scarcely know what. Whatever it was I said, it aroused the man's compassion. He asked if he could assist me in any way, and even invited me to stay at his mother's house for the night. This of course I did not want to do. I had work to do that night, and besides, to go with him in my then state might have led to an examination which would have declared me mad. (This fear—the fear of being shut up in an asylum is ever with me. It has prevented me laying all the facts in my knowledge before the authorities long ago). This young man (Gerald Mortimer, I have since ascertained, is his name)) was very persistent. He tried to compel me to go to his mother's, and I had eventually to run across the fields from him and hide in the wood. I remained there for a good while, until the rattle of wheels on the sandy road leading towards the asylum, made me issue therefrom and resume my task of watching.

"To do this I made my way out at the top of the wood, crossed the strip of meadowland, dividing it from the road. Almost immediately I caught sight of a closed fly. There was a burly man sitting on the box, while, impatiently pacing the path, keeping as much in the shadow as he possibly could, walked one whom I immediately recognised as Roderick Vanstone.

"Crouching low amongst a clump of furze bushes I was hidden from all observation.

"I had not long to wait before something occurred which Vanstone apparently expected. Over the top of the asylum wall there appeared a face. It was the face of my brother Felix Cordelvin. I could not mistake it. No one has eyes like

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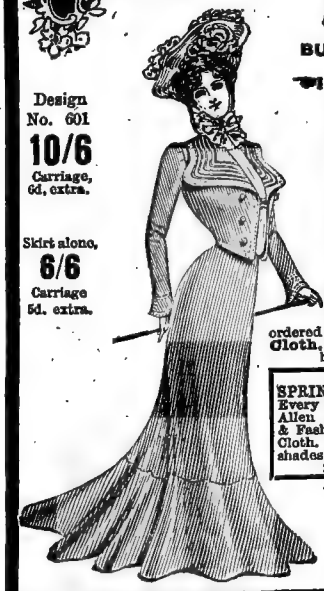

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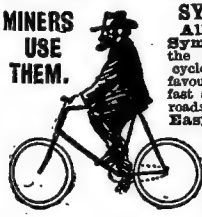

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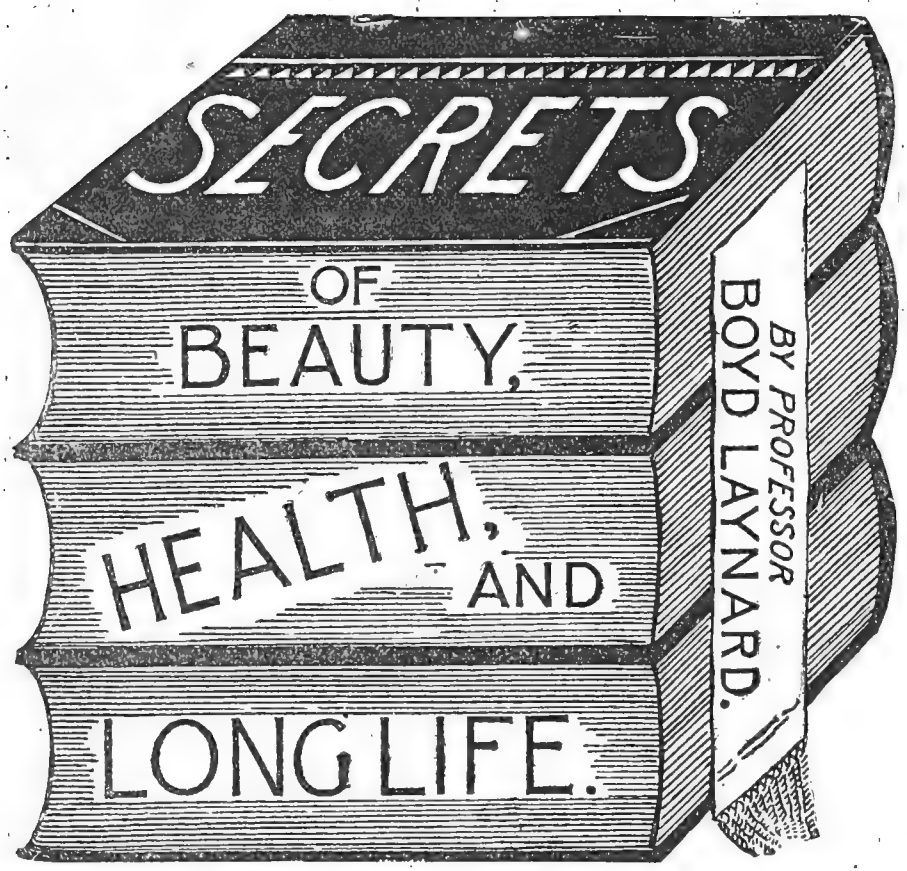

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Felix—except perhaps myself. At the appearance of the head over the wall Vanstone did not lose a minute. From the interior of the fly, he took out a folding ladder, which he promptly placed against the wall. Down this Felix climbed nimbly. A minute later—less than that, for it all happened before I could realise it—the man on the box had whipped up the horse and driven away. I tried to follow, but it was in vain that my weak, trembling limbs pursued the vehicle."

"I am back in London again. I caught the first train back on the morning following the escape or kidnapping (whichever it is) of my brother. I judged that Vanstone would go back there too, and I judged rightly. For, on my repairing as soon as possible to Brixton, I caught sight of him walking in the grounds. (I had previously got a key made to fit one of the gates.) Whether my brother Felix was in the house I could not at this time tell, but I resolved to do my utmost to find out.

"Late that night, Roderick Vanstone came from his house and, walking down Brixton Hill, engaged a cab. I got another and ordered my driver to follow his. What a long weary way we went, right over London Bridge, through the City to the dreary East End. Vanstone alighted and called on Dr. Ephraim Manisty, Stevedore Street, Ratcliff Highway, who, to my astonishment, presently emerged with Vanstone and entered the cab with him. As they came out, they nearly detected my presence on the step, where I had crouched, vainly trying to catch whatever conversation they might be having. But I heard nothing, and there was nothing else to do but to still follow their cab.

"All the way back to Brixton Hill I was trying to guess the nature of this nocturnal errand. If a doctor were needed, as was evidently the case, why had not a local one been called in? Why had Vanstone taken so long a journey to seek out an obscure practitioner in the East End? Something—some vile plot—was afoot. I followed in their wake right to the house walls, watched for the appearance of a light, and then went to the window where it presently shone.

"With my ears pressed close against the panes I listened intently. But I could distinguish no words, only a mumbling sound. As I remained there listening I was very nearly discovered, for a sudden gust of wind made my cloak rattle against the window. Immediately I heard the curtains inside drawn back, and I had to remove a step or two to avoid being seen. In the light of the room I could see Dr. Manisty, his face very pale, and his manner plainly one of fear. But in that brief glance which I had of him, it was not his face which attracted me most. It was something he held in his hand, the bright, glittering blade of a surgeon's scalpel! Only one brief glance did I get of it, for immediately afterwards the curtains were drawn close to, and I could see no more.

"But what I had seen was sufficient to fill me with a dazing sense of infinite fear. What was Dr. Manisty doing with that instrument? Performing an operation? Of what kind? On whom? For what reason? A score of questions crowded themselves on to me. There came back to my inner consciousness but one word in answer. Felix!

"My brother's name came upon me with the force of a cannon shot. What were they doing with him? What was their black plot? Oh, that I could unmask them!

"In my frenzy I actually forgot all risk of discovery for a second, and tried the catch of the French window. For a second time the curtains were drawn back and once more Dr. Manisty showed himself, mortal dread in his eyes now. Then, as before, the curtains were hurriedly drawn again, and I saw no more.

"I waited two—three hours. Dr. Manisty departed. I saw him go, and I let him go. I waited on, sheltering myself in an outhouse in full view of the whole side of the house.

"Almost precisely as the clock of a neighbouring church was striking the hour of four, Roderick Vanstone emerged from the house, accompanied by a younger man, his son, I believe. It was sufficiently strange to see them come out at such an hour, but to see them carrying a lantern, a pick-axe, spades, and a box, was far more so.

"Straight across to a shrubbery on the other side of the grounds they walked and I followed them. For the next half hour I saw them hack and dig, and in the hole which they had dug, I saw them place the box. Then they carefully filled in the deep hole, and quite unaware of the fact that they were being watched, made their way back, leaving their paraphernalia in a tool-house, and then going indoors.

"What was it they had buried? Something out of the way since it demanded a cloak of darkness for its burial. I would have seized a spade there and then and gone at once to re-open the hole in the shrubbery, but I reflected that morning would break ere I could complete my task, and that the risk to me would be considerable.

"So I made up my mind to relinquish my intention for the time. I would come the next night and dig and dig till I came upon what I felt sure would be a guilty secret."

"I am weary and sick at heart. I have discovered the guilty secret, but I am powerless to punish this monster Vanstone. Why am I condemned to have the mortal fear of madness on me? But for that, I could now go straight to the police and inform against these villains. Some day, perhaps, I may yet get the courage, but just now, no—I dare not.

"I must be calm though, and record what I have done. I visited the shrubbery as I had determined the next night, and after a little trouble I found the spot on which the two men had dug the night previously. Then I began to dig upon the same spot. It was dreadful work. Not only in its aching effects upon my poor weak and tired limbs, but from the abiding consciousness that any moment I might come across what I intuitively surmised must be some grim object. At last my spade struck wood, and now I knew that I should soon be at the end of my search. I extricated the box, hauled it up, opened it, and gazed upon its contents by the light of my shaded lantern.

"Horror! my brain reeled as I looked, the bushes around me seemed to revolve, the mould at my feet to roll and leap as if from an earthquake. Only by a great effort was I able to control myself. And then once more I looked and saw, what?

"A human arm, amputated just above the elbow!

"When we see those that we love, we can recognise them without getting a full view of their face. We know them by their hair, their eyes, their mouths, their shoulders. In like manner, as I looked upon the grim object lying in the box below me, I recognised the shape and markings of the hand, and from that moment I knew that the amputated limb belonged to Felix Cordelvin, my brother!"

(To be concluded.)

Misunderstood.

CLARA: "Now, I'm all ready for the ball. How do I look, Jack?" Jack: "You remind me of a Sioux in his war-paint." Clara: "Oh, you nasty thing! I—I——" Jack: "Don't cry, darling! I simply meant you were dressed to kill."

Her Own Work.

YOUNG WIFE: "I knew you would like the slippers, Harry, if for no other reason because I made them." Husband: "You don't mean to say this is all your work? Why, what a talented little wife I have, to be sure." Young Wife: "Yes, all my work. Of course I bought the uppers, and Mary sewed them together, and I got a man to sole them; but I put the bows on, and did them up in the box. And, do you know, Harry, I am just proud of myself. I didn't think I could ever do such things, indeed I didn't."

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IN CONFIDENCE

Conducted by

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[*I shall be glad to answer, to the best of my ability, any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to me personally, c/o the Editor of* SHORT STORIES.]

A Case for Candour.

"MARGARET" has a young man at the front, to whom she has been attached from childhood, and has promised marriage. Since he has been at the war, she has met another man whom she really loves. The soldier thinks she will be true to him. How can she act?—If you really love the second man, you should not hesitate to accept him. Unfortunately, it only too often happens that a girl discovers during her sweetheart's absence at the war, especially one of such long duration as the present, that there is another she loves better. Don't try to deceive your soldier friend.

❦❦❦

Be quite candid with him. Tell him the complete truth. It will, of course, be a blow to him, but it will be better than if he grew suspicious and worried himself with doubt about you, to find out on his return that you were no longer true to him. The girl who pretends to be still fond of one man while she loves another usually loses both, as in the case of the heroine of the play "Iris." Be open with him, "MARGARET," and though he will be distressed for the time being, it will be better for both of you that you should marry the man you love.

❦❦❦

A Too Bland Sweetheart.

"AMY" suffers from a lack of proper jealousy on the part of the young man to whom she is engaged. For a long time they have been on terms of intimacy, of a rather "pallish" order than otherwise. Lately, she has met a man who has professed a deep attachment for her, and continues to write the most ecstatic letters, protesting his devotion. For some time she treated it as a joke, then decided to let her *fiancé* know about it, and abide by the consequences.

❦❦❦

When she told him, instead of turning into a white heat of passion, he smiled, and in the most amiable way asked why she did not answer such nice letters in an appropriate strain, and in other ways seemed to be humorously indifferent to the claims of his rival. Does this attitude suggest that he does not care for her, and so does not mind her receiving letters from another?

❦❦❦

I rather think that young man is so sure of "AMY'S" affection towards himself that he is profoundly contemptuous to the chances of another. Probably "AMY" has too often revealed that she could never care for anyone else for him to be led into supposing the other man could have a look in. At the same time, it is exceedingly bad taste on his part, at any rate, not to show some jealousy. But seriously, "AMY," you should very kindly but firmly tell that other man that he must cease his letters, in spite of your own lover's indifference. It is no use allowing such pretensions to continue. Probably a straight word of reproval will at once bring the obnoxious correspondence to an end.

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Should Schoolgirls Flirt?

"MRS. A. F." has a daughter who is at school, where she has a reputation for being a terrible flirt with the local youth. This my correspondent has taken no notice of, believing that for a schoolgirl to flirt with boys does not necessarily mean any harm, but rather tends to fit them for entering male society when they get older without that absurd modesty shown by so many girls. I do not agree with the philosophic attitude of "MRS. A. F.," which is one of those things excellent in theory but often fatal in practice.

❦❦❦

What "MRS. A. F." may picture herself as flirting may be very different in fact. It may be far from the innocent play which she suspects. Young girls are more liable to cast their eyes towards the bold, bad music master, or the handsome curate, than towards some insignificant, crude schoolboy, and the results are often bad. The men in question, while never for a moment entertaining serious thoughts of any feeling towards the girls, are not, as a rule deficient in the artifices of love-making, which they use to no small advantage in stealing the girls' affections. "MRS. A. F." may be right as regards the innocence of flirting with schoolboys, but girls should not be allowed too much license in this way, as the consequences are seldom other than harmful.

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One Good Trick Deserves Another.

SOME two or three years ago, "ANXIOUS ONE" fell in love with a young man. Later on she received a letter from him saying he could not love her, but could only regard her as a friend. Since that, however, he has informed her that he is very fond of her, and says he simply wrote to her in that strain to find out if she really cared for him. She doubts his sincerity. Should she resume the acquaintance which was so cruelly broken off?

❦❦❦

I think the best way now for you to test his love is to pay him back in exactly the same coin. Why not write to him saying you yourself do not feel you really love him, and wait developments. If he is really and truly fond of you he will instantly resume his suit, and if so you will then know his sincerity. The truth of the matter, however, is probably not that he was really in love with you and anxious to put you to the test, but that at the time of his momentous letter was in doubts as to the state of his feelings, which after a while became clearer, when he wrote and retracted what he had said. If this is the case, his affection is quite possibly likely to be more lasting, as he has turned the matter over in his mind, and finally decided that he does love you.

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